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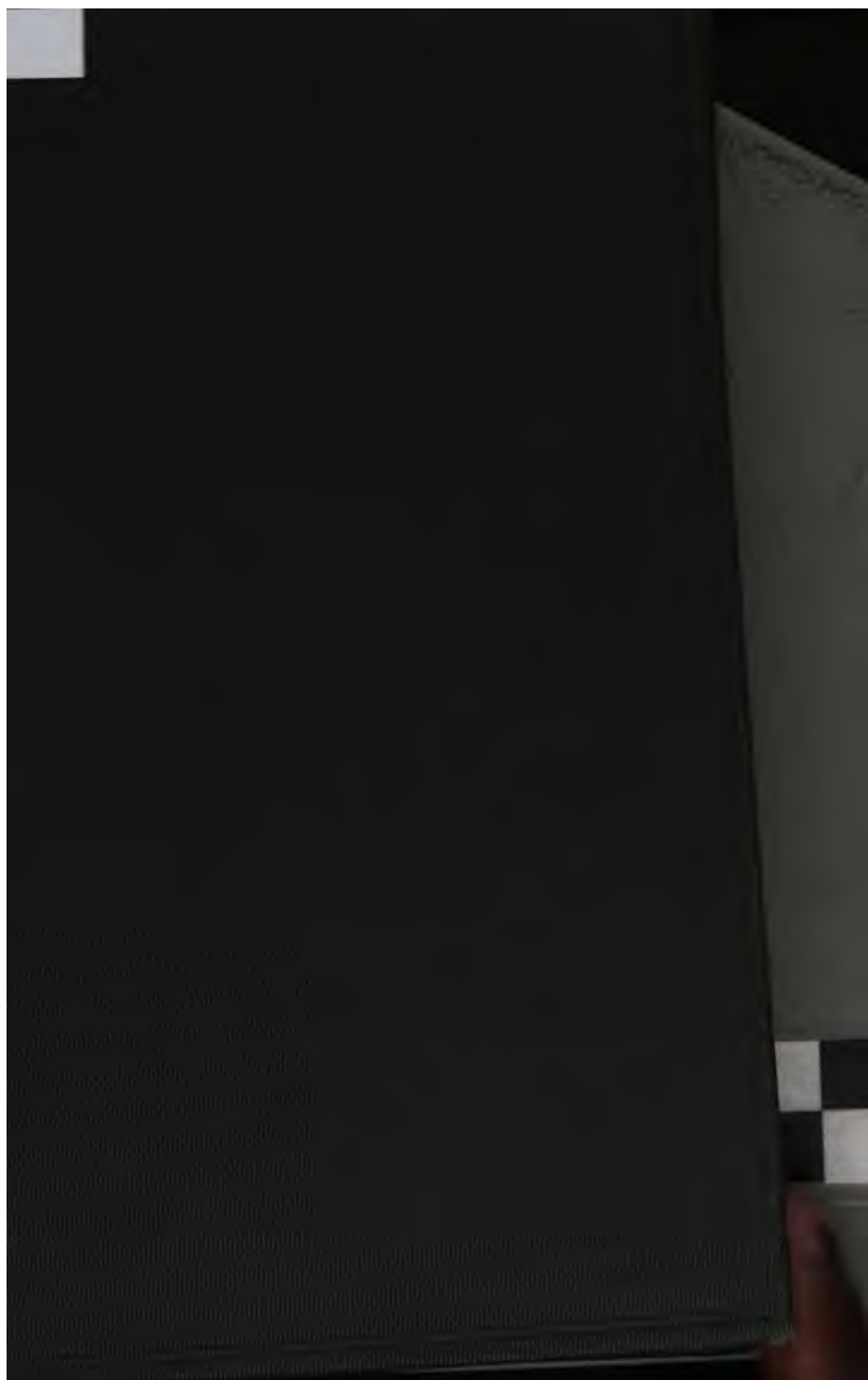
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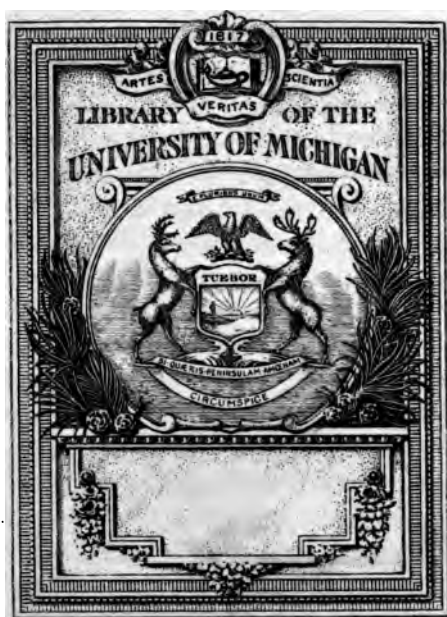
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**A SON OF THE
HIDALGOS**

BOOKS BY RICARDO LEÓN

EL AMOR DE LOS AMORES (THE LOVE OF
LOVES)

Crowned by the Spanish Academy

COMEDIA SENTIMENTAL (A SENTIMENTAL
COMEDY)

LOS CABALLEROS DE LA CRUZ (KNIGHTS
OF THE CROSS)

EUROPA TRAGICA (TRAGIC EUROPE)

LOS CENTAUROS (THE CENTAURS)

A SON OF THE HIDALGOS

BY
RICARDO LEÓN

Member of la Academia Española

TRANSLATED BY
CATALINA PÁEZ
(MRS. SUMAS MACMANUS)



GARDEN CITY, N. Y., AND TORONTO
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

1921



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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

THE work of Ricardo León, one of the most popular and distinguished writers of the day in Spain, is here for the first time presented to American readers. "A Son of the Hidalgos" introduces one of Spain's most famous novelists, as well as the most widely read book that has appeared in Spanish in the last thirty years.

The loss of her colonies and the war of '98 plunged Spain into a state of the blackest pessimism. It was not only the material loss and humiliation she had suffered; it was something akin to the sensation of one who fancies himself on firm ground, and suddenly discovers that he has been standing over a gaping abyss all the while. The old fictions melted away overnight. Everything crumbled to dust at a touch. The farces, the deceptions, the makeshifts and compromises of two centuries of misgovernment were laid bare by one fatal, decisive blow. Despair followed.

The creative efforts of what is generally called "the generation of '98" in Spain were all marked by an acute note of criticism of all that had preceded, and by an effort to hew out for themselves new paths. These paths were diverse and unique. The only link between them was the desire of all to break sharply and radically with the past. Under these conditions a rich

and copious literary production ensued. But the public at last became a little restive under the sustained criticism and levelling off of the past. It was at this point that Ricardo León appeared with his novel "Casta de Hidalgos" (A Son of the Hidalgos). Its success was instantaneous, over-night. Before its publication Ricardo León was entirely unknown save in his own little circle of friends. The next day everybody was asking, "Who is this restorer of our Golden Age?"

Ricardo León appeared at a moment when the Spaniards found themselves doubting the value of everything Spanish to assert the vitality and eternal beauty of their traditional language and style. He turned his back on the foreign influences predominant in his contemporaries, and steeped himself in the language of the classics: Santa Teresa, Luis de León, Góngora, Cervantes. Into these beautiful traditional molds he poured all the eager, questioning modern sensibility that has marked the writers of the last generation everywhere. And the results set at naught the maxim of the new wine in old bottles.

The natural gifts of Ricardo León were remarkably favoured by the accident of his birth. He was born in 1877 in Malaga, one of the most beautiful spots in all luminous Andalusia. During his youth he absorbed together with the light and beauty of the country, the spirit of Andalusia. The soul of Andalusia is the result of a fusion of the most witty, full-flavoured, and picturesque popular spirit—a relic of the Moorish domination—with the exuberance and elegance that devel-

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

vii

oped there after the Spanish reconquest and which flowered forth in the contributions of Góngora, Herrera, and Fray Luis de Granada to the literature of the Golden Age. It is this inimitable, unforgettable style that stamps Ricardo León's writings, and gives him a position all his own among the writers of the day.

His youth passed uneventfully. He held a modest position in the Bank of Spain, and in 1901 was transferred from his native city to Santander. His literary tendencies were already manifest in his contributions to the newspapers of Malaga and in the publication of a book of verses.

Santander, a province in the north of Spain, has been called "the cradle of Castile." It has given to Spain many of its most noble and distinguished families. And of all Santander, the city of Santillana-by-the-sea, the scene of "A Son of the Hidalgos," has preserved even to-day, unmarred as yet by our modern civilization, a relic of the days when the sun never set in Spanish domain. Its old manor-houses with their stone-carved arms above the portal still stand intact, and the silence and solitude of its streets make it seem a city enchanted. But the old high purpose that animated its sons three centuries ago is gone, and in its place are fictions without life that wrap themselves about the soul of its modern survivors and choke out the fire of ambition. Santillana-by-the-sea had a most profound effect on Ricardo León, and he at once conceived this novel which he first planned to call "The Soul of the Ruins." It is indicative of the extraordinary capacity of his spirit to note how, in spite of the fact that

he had been raised and steeped in the sunshine of Andalusia, he caught and transmitted with astonishing fidelity the soul of this misty city of the Pyrenees, so different from his own land. In 1905 he sent the finished work to a publisher in Madrid. It was rejected by one after another, until finally it was published in his native city of Malaga, in 1908. So extraordinary was its success that its author became known in a very short time wherever Spanish is read.

From that time on Ricardo León has devoted himself almost exclusively to his writing. In recent years he has taken an interest in politics, and has served in the Spanish parliament as a representative of the Conservative party. But this is a passing interest; the guiding purpose of his life is his work, and, as he is still a young man, much is to be expected of him. In 1909 he published "*Alcalá de los Zegries*" (Alcala of the Zegris) and "*La Comedia Sentimental*" (The Sentimental Comedy). In 1910 he published "*La Escuela de los Sofistas*" (The School of the Sophists), and "*El amor de los amores*" (The Love of Loves) which was awarded the Fastenrath prize by the Royal Academy in 1911.

In 1912 the greatest official tribute that Spain can pay her writers was awarded him when he was elected a member of the Royal Academy of Letters. This honour usually comes to crown a life-time of production; but in this case it was unanimously awarded a man not yet thirty-five years old.

Ricardo León has also written two books of verse, "*Lira de Bronce*" (The Lyre of Bronze) and "*Alivio de Caminantes*" (Traveller's Solace). But it is to his

prose writings that he owes his enduring fame. His style is unique. In every line his noble, sonorous language evokes a world of beauty and reminiscence. In his writings he blends with marvellous skill and ease the spoken language, with its mannerisms and quips, and the polished, filigreed language of the classics. His lyre plays every note, with the most delicate variations. There are moments when his prose insensibly turns to verse, so perfectly does his expression adjust itself to the emotion.

"A Son of the Hidalgos" has had the rare fortune to meet with a translator who is herself a writer, and who has particularly interested herself in matters of literary style. Mrs. Seumas McManus, though born and educated in this country, is of Spanish origin. Her grandfather was General José Antonio Páez, first president of Venezuela, who was, after Bolivar and Miranda, the most conspicuous figure in freeing Spanish-America from the domination of Spain. Her father was Don Ramón Páez, himself a man of letters, who trained his daughter in the Spanish language and literature, to which he was deeply devoted. At the age of eighteen Mrs. McManus began writing for publication, and has published many short stories dealing with Venezuelan life and character.

Rarely does one find a translator who is at once a trained writer and a student of the language he is translating. Mrs. MacManus has not merely *translated* "A Son of the Hidalgos"; she has *reproduced* in English the style and the emotion of the original work.

FOREWORD

IN AN out-of-the-way corner of the Mountain, far from the noise and bustle of modern civilization, there lies a singular village, a venerable relic of ancient Spain, a place of poetry and silence, famous alike in history and legend, which is called Santillana del Mar.

This strange town rests in its enchanted sleep of centuries, like those carved effigies which gaze up at us from sarcophagi in dark and silent chapels, with a grave and mystic expression, as though they would reveal to us the hidden secrets of eternity. Present-day life flees from this solitary corner to gayer spots, where happy voices resound in market-place and fair ground, and the clink of dollars accompanies the click of castanets and tambourines. The miner's pick and shovel have never pierced the tender breast of Mother Earth in this remote spot; nor has the telegraph threaded her silver wires through the dreamy air above it; nor the shriek and whistle of the locomotive dared to break in upon its sleep of the ages.

Here one may read as in the yellowed pages of some old tome, hidden in a forgotten corner of the world's great bookshelf, the story of Spanish life and customs, from the time of the troubadours to the beginning of the eighteenth century, each page a scrap of history, each chapter a legend, each folio a glorious feat of arms.

Here ten centuries look out upon us with the vacant and staring eyes of the dead; here they speak to us of life and of death, legend and history, beauty and virtue, high thinking and noble doing. Here are the Middle Ages, symbolized in the slender, dreamy Santa Illana, incarnation of the heroic, adventurous, passionate mysticism of that iron age of Christianity. Here those Middle Ages linger also in the works of her monks and artisans, the beautiful Romanesque church, and the exquisite columns of its cloister. Here dawned the first rays of the Renaissance, glorified in the gallant figure of Don Iñigo Lopez de Mendoza, first marquis of Santillana, flower and mirror of gallant knighthood and of the wit and learning of fifteenth-century Castile: that great knight, "wise and discreet of heart," equally facile with pen and with rapier, and of whom it was written that "his use of the one never dulls the point of the other"; prudent, valorous, good-tempered, and gracious; a prototype, in short, of both warrior and savant, and whose glorious name is still revered in the village.

Here also linger traces of the charming pagan gayety of the Renaissance which, in passing through Santillana, gilded it with the beams of her radiant sun. Its refinements of living and feeling for art are still revealed in the beautiful sculptures, sumptuous furnishings, and exquisite fabrics which, musty and shabby, hide themselves within the crumbling walls of these once-gorgeous castles and palaces. Here also are the relics of that golden age of Spain, when she ranked above all others as discoverer of worlds and conqueror of empires.

Following the age of iron, the age of silver, the age of gold, there now breathes an air of paltry joys and buffoonery, and the splendid realism of the novel of adventure, with its swordsmen and Bohemians, its impoverished hidalgos and its licentious ladies, all the folly of the life of the student and soldier. The soul of Santillana del Mar now becomes roguish and crafty. The martyred damsel, the warlike and poetic marquis, the knights of noble lineage, saints and cavaliers, leaders and captains, those whose shields glowed with arms and quarterings—crosses, maces, serpents, cauldrons, eagles, and plumes—are they not as symbolic of the life of the ancient village, as is this rascally plebeian, born in the brain of a novelist, who carries on the thread of this strange history of Santillana;—Gil Blas, the adventurer arrives, and though largely a product of art, he takes his place in our imaginations with as great a reality as that of the saint and the marquis; he is endowed with the same human and immortal life which animated the Tagles y los Ceballos, Velardes y los Barredas, all those knightly mountaineers who paraded in their coats of mail and plumed helmets through the pages of legend and of history. Gil Blas represents the effervescence of the life of the people, that "*olla podrida*" of classes, ideas, customs, and sentiments of seventeenth-century Spain, when notions of knighthood and of positivism linked hands at every turn, and when they crucified Don Quixote and the good Sancho Panza.

The eighteenth century brings to the village, now in its decadence, the last splendours of the life of the hidalgos and grand señores, who had fled to their great

manor-houses, which one can see dreaming along the Canton road, flaunting their lordly shields and escutcheons. Revolution has transformed the earth. The bells of the church toll for many dead, and the village, closing the last page of her history, sinks down into her eternal sleep in the shadow of her mournful old towers. Santillana is dead; but from her venerable stones there still issues a deep, spiritual life, the subtle and inextinguishable aroma of ten centuries of human living, art, beauty, and thought.

Those who love the poetry of history and also love that of legend, which is sometimes more philosophical than history itself; those who feel the noble sadness of the past, the peace of remembrance, the ineffable sweetness of silence and repose; those who are devoted to the traditions of patriotism, will find few places of meditation and dreaming more beautiful, more unusual, or more delightful than this sweet and knightly Santillana del Mar.

The stupid solicitude of prosaic and vulgar reformers is changing little by little the face of the villages and cities of Spain, where once one could feast upon the poetry of the past: Grenada, Toledo, Salamanca, those reliquaries of ancient Spanish art and spirit, are losing all their character through the foolish onslaughts of civilization, as if all of that were contained within the straight lines of the beehives of modern apartment houses, rather than in a sensible and artistic progress of the natural evolution of the old-time Spanish house. Ganivet, one of the most modern and independent of

souls which Spain has produced, has fulminated his indignation at this, decrying the spoliation of these ancient Spanish cities, now profaned by modern barbarians who understand neither history, art, nor real modern progress.

On this account the strange case of this mountain village, which preserves in all its integrity the cradle of the past, strikes one with especial force. And it is equally strange and pleasing to find within a few leagues of the railroad and the telegraph, close to industrial centres like those of Santander and Comillas, such an authentic archeological slumber, such an archaic village, in whose silent and deserted streets one can listen to the pulse of time as in a backwater of eternity.

Few things can compare with the profound impression produced when, travelling the road to Santillana, in the depths of the valley one happens upon this settlement sleeping among olive and yew trees, its crumbling stones coloured that exquisite reddish-brown produced only by the winds and rain of time. And this impression is intensified when, upon rounding a corner of the road and crossing that charming *atrium*, the meadow of Revolgo, one enters the village, that ancient stronghold of knightly legend, where to-day one finds peace and quiet, soothed by shadowy trees and murmuring fountains.

And now, good friend reader, if this village pleases you, and after soothing your soul in the fields of Revolgo, you wish to penetrate further into its secrets in

my company, I beg that you will go forward along the road of my novel. This was born in Santillana del Mar; and though nourished by a poor story-teller, it was rocked in a famous cradle.

In this book I do not give you history flavoured with the salt of fiction and warmed by the heat of fantasy, but a true story of suffering souls, living things wet with warm and human tears.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE FIRST JOURNEY	
Castle and Roadside	I
THE SECOND JOURNEY	
The Tears of Things	57
THE THIRD JOURNEY	
The Dance of the Dead	107
THE FOURTH JOURNEY	
The Flame of a Lasting Love	145
THE FIFTH JOURNEY	
The Dark Night of the Soul	259

**THE FIRST JOURNEY
CASTLE AND ROADSIDE**

A SON OF THE HIDALGOS

CHAPTER I

OF THE race of Gil Blas, dreamer, rebel, poet, and lover, was Pedro de Ceballos—a gallant youth, tall, pale, with grave, austere features, large and burning eyes, aquiline nose, a moist and sensual mouth, and a haughty head crowned with long, romantic locks. He was the son of an old mountain nobleman—heir to one of those entailed estates which still exist in the far-away corners of Cantabria, as though carved out of aged flint—and here the old man had lived during long-drawn-out years, forgotten by the world, in his solemn and stately manor-house of Santillana. And in this remote and quiet village Pedro was born and reared, his mind nourished upon ancient memories, and his fancy excited with stories of romance and adventure, until by degrees he became filled with the desire to see new sights, to give wing to his soul and, like a lark, flee from that sepulchre of the dead and the living in which, hidden from the world, he passed his days. This desire became embedded in his deepest soul, an essential part of his being—until one night his thoughts surged into action and, without word or warning to any one, he burst precipitately out of the

bland and gentle calmness of his home to ride forth into the lists of the unknown world before him.

The night was calm and peaceful, a summer night in the Asturias of Santillana. Mounted on an ancient mare, Pedro spurred her to the limit of her capacity, his heart burning with eagerness to realize his dreams of adventure. Although he was alone and travelling a deserted roadway, his only arms an antique pistol, his only money a bare thirty dollars, these were sufficient to banish all thought of care and anxiety from the mind of the young lunatic, who thus launched forth upon unknown ways, even daring to leave the beaten road to ride by short cuts and leafy footpaths. With his mind filled with memories of the tales and romances upon which he had been feasting, he began to fancy that he was the very embodiment of Gil Blas, his famous compatriot—when, on leaving Oviedo, he had ridden forth, mounted on a mule and rattling in his hat the forty ducats which he had hurled at his good old uncle. And at this, in order not to be outdone by Gil Blas, Pedro began to count and rattle his thirty dollars, and as he was somewhat ignorant of the exact value of a ducat in present-day coinage, he found himself not quite so rich as his illustrious predecessor. But, he pondered, on the other hand, he was not riding a mule, but a horse; and he also considered with pride that he had still another advantage—that of lineage—for was he not the son of a grandee instead of a common swordsman?

At this juncture the mare suddenly pricked up her ears as though in alarm, and Pedro, recalling Gil Blas's

famous adventure with the mendicant who begged alms at the point of a sword, felt his heart quail a little, recalling that on these roads one often encountered beggars whose appearance bore all the hallmarks of highwaymen, and he trembled to think that among those dark and misty banks he might even stumble upon the terrible den of Roland. Midnight had now passed and he found that he had ridden more than forty miles. Behind him lay the village of Cabezón, the ancient stones and legends of Treceño, Roíz—the cradle of Juan de Herrera—that soldier artist—Udías and St. Vincent, and he found himself now close to the frontier of the two Asturias; now he discerned Pesués in the distance, and could hear in the silence of the night the rumble and roar of the mighty waters of the Mansa.

Any one less bereft of all reason than was Pedro might well have been abashed by a journey at such an untimely hour over unknown roads and across sharp defiles, through silent forests and by roaring rivers. Such a pilgrimage might have given pause to a youth of less than twenty years, uninitiated in the risks and adventures of travelling; but Pedro was above all thoughts of fear; he delighted in the humid freshness of the night, in the silent grandeur of the countryside, bathed by the mellow moonlight; he seemed to have risen above himself, and he felt that his destinies were being guided for him. Some peasants now passed along the road and gravely and courteously saluted the good-looking youth, as though they saw nothing unusual in meeting a stranger upon their roads at such an un-

seemly hour. They probably took him for some painter or tourist about to scale the snow-crowned heights of Cantabria, which from a distance sparkled in the moonlight.

And now appeared Hunquera and the broad, smooth current of that historic river—the Deva. By these signs Pedro recognized that he was very close to the frontier and felt a great impatience to finish the first lap of his journey; when suddenly he heard, echoing through the mountains, a strange and horrible sound like a monstrous sigh, which filled his soul with terror. He reined in his horse and pressed into a little recess in the road where he tremblingly hid himself until the cause of his anxiety should pass. The grumbling and groaning drew nearer, when heavens! he beheld the object of his terrors—some ancient and innocent Asturian carts, whose heavy axles creaked and groaned horribly in the silence of the night. In the sudden revulsion of his feelings Pedro almost came to blows with the carters who were accountable for his ridiculous adventure; before he recollected that he alone was at fault for not having recognized that chant of the ox-carts which he had heard so many times on the roads of his own mountain home. Provoked to crossness by this adventure, he again mounted his horse and spurred ahead like a streak of lightning. This time the road lay toward the coast, and as the pale rays of the dawn lit up the sky, he could perceive the white hunting-lodge of Colombres. And now the hoarse roar of the sea broke through the early morning, and Pedro, exhausted by his long journey, flung himself off his

horse and entered a little inn upon the outskirts of the town. A group of loitering peasants and fishermen gazed upon him with mild curiosity, and watched him consume great draughts of fresh milk with which he proceeded to regale himself.

But they did not watch him long, for without permitting himself further refreshment he again mounted his horse, for he was impatient to reach Llañes, which was to be his first stopping-place. And so again he spurred along the roads, until at last he perceived this village before him. But instead of being filled with delight and satisfaction, as he had anticipated, a deep depression suddenly settled upon him. He thought of his father, his home, the risks which he had run, and he felt his soul falter. Like a wilful, runaway child who, at the end of his stolen joys, finds himself longing for home and mother, Pedro suddenly repented of his impetuous deed, and thought what a wonderful thing it would be to rest beneath his father's roof. In another minute he would have turned and retraced his way when, as fate would have it, he suddenly heard the sound of horses' feet and the rumble and roar of the diligence which approached at full speed. As the coach flashed by him, there appeared at the window a face of wonderful beauty, and a sweet and soft voice saluted him graciously. Then the diligence disappeared in the distance, but just as he lost sight of it, Pedro perceived a white handkerchief waving from one of its windows.

CHAPTER II

PERMIT me to present to you Señor Don Pedro de Ceballos, a native of Santillana and, I verily believe, a descendant of Gil Blas; a bad student, poet, lazybones, and lover, fond of adventure and aspiring to be a comedian, in which capacity he is about to join our honoured company. I, Pablo de Rojas, first actor of Spain and her colonies, somewhat reduced in estate by the whirligig of fortune, but still envied by my imitators, I dub him knight of the Order of Bohemia, and I call upon you all to witness the accolade."

Upon saying these words, Pablo de Rojas struck our hero a none-too-gentle blow upon the shoulder with his cane, and, sweeping off his hat, made him a grandiloquent bow.

They were in the courtyard of an inn, gathered about the broad curb of a well—a company of strolling players; one of those poverty-stricken, errant troupes, who carry into modern times and keep alive in our age the bygone tradition of the Spanish strolling theatre. At this moment they were all laughing immoderately as there advanced from the group a lady, squinting and somewhat well on in years, who with hoarse voice and solemn manner thus addressed Pedro:

"Welcome, young gallant, to our illustrious company.

May you live many years with us to cast lustre upon the stage, and to be honoured by the muses."

"Behold here, my friend, the first of our dramatic actresses," said Pablo de Rojas, pointing to her who had just ceased speaking, "Doña Dolores Chacon, or 'La Chacona,' as we call her for short; a noble matron who in her youth was the star of Spain, and who to-day drags her glory through these little villages. She performs in tragedy like a Rachel, and in spite of sometimes being a trifle ill-natured, she is usually as tender as a lambkin."

At this La Chacona launched a furious tirade at the comedian, and was continuing her shrill protests when Don Pablo interrupted her, saying:

"This other lady," pointing to a petite and beautiful creature, "is the ingenue of the company. There is no need for us to present her to you. She is La Camelia. On account of your love for her, you are abandoning your paternal home and adopting the profession of a comedian."

Pedro gazed upon La Camelia with adoration in his eyes, and the girl, making a little grimace of coquetry, covered her face with her fan. Subsequently Don Pablo presented him to the rest of the troupe, bringing each forward with joking remarks; and the ceremony was finally completed by the following speech from the director of the company, delivered with pompous voice and classical intonation:

"Take it from me, my young friend, this free life of wandering art is going to open up marvels before you. A youth of your gifts has no right to be sunk in a lonely

corner of the mountains, without recognition from the world. Behold me here, who from my very earliest days have never known what it was to be anchored in one spot. I have spent my life, my youth, my glory, and my fortune on all the roads of the world, after the manner of the troubadours of old, without ever envying others their comforts and ease. I was born in bad times, when force, gallantry, free originality were considered as sins which nobody would pardon; but in spite of this, I have lived without care, and although at times I rebel against the world, I never have been sorry for that which I have done. I am the last of the classic actors of the Spanish stage, the final comedian of Corral del Principe, and no one will ever be able to take from me the glory of that which I am. Vain and fleeting is the glory of the theatre, but I take great pride in being the last of that line of which Don Agustin de Rojas, my illustrious ancestor, the '*Caballero del Milargro*,' was the first. If it pleases you to imitate my example, young nobleman, if you can feel, as I do, the poetry of such an adventurous existence; if you be not affrighted by my glorious poverty, you come in good hour; and you will be, as our good friend, La Chacona, so well says, illustrious in our art and recognized by the muses. And now, my dear friends, let us leave our tongues in peace, and look for a spot in this humble inn where we may breakfast."

The little town of Llañes was "*en fiesta*" at this particular time; the beautiful Asturian village was bedecked like a bride for her wedding, for they were celebrating a pilgrimage to the Virgin. The head-

quarters of popular frolic was centred in the Mall, where a great crowd of peasants and sailors were dancing the classic dances of the country, accompanied by hurdy-gurdies and tamborils. Here also great tables had been set up, loaded with food and drink, where many of the country people were gorging themselves; a little beyond danced a group of apple-cheeked girls in gay dresses, a flower behind the ear, with eyes cast down before the laughing youths who pranced opposite them; in the shade of great olive trees a bowling match was in progress between some of the most famous players of the two Asturias; from the strand beyond were wafted the syncopated notes of love songs and lyrics, accompanied by soft guitars and clattering tambourines. Here and there a white parasol fluttered above the intense green of the sward like a giant butterfly, for to-day the ladies of Llañes and other neighbouring towns mingled and danced with the countrymen and fishermen—"High to low and low to high," as the Spanish saying goes—according to the democratic custom of these villages, which modern ideas are striving to destroy.

This scene of healthy joy, painted in showy colours and glowing with the sparkling sunlight, might have been a picture of some Flemish kermess or carnival painted by one of the old masters.

Having finished his breakfast, Pedro sauntered in and out of the fair grounds on the arm of Don Pablo de Rojas, each moment more enchanted by the cleverness and humour of the mountebank. This Don Pablo, as everybody called him with great respect, was dark,

one-eyed, red of nose, and corpulent of figure. He was nearly seventy years old, but by no means looked his age, although his cleanly shaven and wrinkled face gave sufficient evidence that he had lived through many years and more experiences. He had once been one of the best actors of Spain, but the star of his glory had fallen, until to-day, forgotten and misused, it twinkled weakly upon such remote villages and byways as his little company of mountebanks selected for their performances. Don Pablo was an Andalusian by birth, and like all his countrymen, clever, witty, gracious, and prodigal. He had never learned the thrifty ways of the ant, but in the days of his youth and prosperity had lived like the grasshopper, squandering his substance, his genius, and his health upon episodes of love and fortune. Age had found him impoverished, and after doing his little turn through the stock companies of the provinces, he had fallen into the errant life of the wandering player, with its embellishments of roguery and rascality.

“If only I can remain here,” exclaimed the poor old comedian, still retaining his humour in spite of the blows of adverse fortune—“if only I can remain stationary as a mendicant player or thief of the roads! I, who once was the mirror of fashion, the terror of both maiden and married, the arbiter of glories, the model of all vanities, I have come to be a wandering comedian! And yet, if you come to think of it, where I leave off, there commenced the glorious fathers of our theatre, the most celebrated of those geniuses: Lope de Rueda, Alonzo de la Vega, Ríos, Cisneros, and that marvellous

poet and actor, Don Augustin de Rojas, my illustrious progenitor. It is well said that in old age we end where in infancy we began. Behold how the theatre, when it dies, resembles the theatre when it is born. A mixture of rogue and dramatist, I, who was the friend of princes and the favourite of noble ladies, to-day I resemble those great actors of classic times in my poverty and misfortune. And I might even write, if I knew how to write, my 'Entertaining Voyage.'"

Don Pablo began to sing the verses of that old song in the affected style of the theatre, and falling from his lips the ancient classic acquired a new emphasis, a fine Castilian manner, and a contemptuous elegance with which he endowed it. The comedian, in spite of his years and infirmities, possessed a melodious and vibrant voice, which even the abuses of drink could not impair. His enunciation was exquisite, and in his gestures he displayed his innate nobility and elegance. He was a great elocutionist, and he abhorred all that was new in drama, while he loved almost to fanaticism the ancient classics: "The Mayor of Zalamea," "The Frolics of the Cid," "Garcia of Castanar," "The Barber of Seville," "The Seven Children of Lara," and others which he knew by heart formed *his* theatre, and it was wonderful to see how in the old Castilian villages and little towns sunk in outworn tradition, where it seemed as though they lived in the past and even talked with the accent and syntax of bygone centuries—it was wonderful to see how Don Pablo de Rojas chanted to these people the verses of Lope de Vega and Tirso and Calderon, who were more these

villagers' contemporaries than any one living in the outside world of this present day and time; or occasionally coming down to modern times, he filled these simple souls with terror when, as circumstances demanded it (let me whisper it in secret, so that it may not be recorded to posterity), he launched into the tirades of modern melodrama, and screamed such phrases as "Death and extermination! Death for both of you! I will learn how to kill myself, but first I shall have the consolation of drinking thy miserable blood!"

Don Pablo by no means shared the knavery and cunning of his good-for-nothing associates of the road. His only vice was inebriety—although no matter how drunk he was, he never trod the boards with anything save dignity and decorum. Other than this, he had a fine and lofty soul, capable of facing untold misery and pain rather than humble himself to any one; he preferred to be the head of this troupe of errant mountebanks, to wander hungry and footsore, rather than be at the foot of things in his own world, and confess himself old and worn out.

"They have tried to put me on the shelf, those villains," he used to cry in the dramatic tone which he used in declamation, "but they have to bury me alive first, in order to overcome or hamper me! They say that I am old, antiquated! Who is there that can perform the classic or romantic drama as I can? They have converted the temple of high art to base uses, these charlatans! What do they know of psychology, of human sentiment and truth? They declaim all kinds of mysteries, translated from the French or the Chinese,

and with these they humbug an imbecile audience. If my distinguished ancestor, Don Agustin de Rojas, or the great Lope de Vega had stooped to such methods, they never would have become immortal. To speak verse as though it were prose, thus destroying the exquisite artifice of poetry, is to turn the theatre into a college of pedants. And all this nonsense about magnificent decoration and scenic effects! Four boards and a badly whitewashed wall were sufficient for Shakespeare and Calderón to present to the world 'Othello' and 'The Mayor of Zalamea!' When there is neither genius nor beauty in the soul, then they descend to affectations and spectacles and foolish coquetry——!"

And herein could be read the story of the rise and the fall of poor Don Pablo's star.

The rest of the company consisted of La Chacona, who was fond of confiding to Don Pablo long tales of her bygone loves; La Camelia, and a half-dozen other unfortunates, whose very names, if names indeed they had, there is no good reason for our remembering.

La Camelia was a poor little waif from Malaga, where in early childhood she had learned to dance and to play little comedy parts; later on she toured through Andalusia, appearing in melodrama or in a singing and dancing act, in the midst of which on the fair grounds of Mariena she fell in with Don Pablo, whose keen eye discerning real talent under her fragile beauty, offered her a place in his troupe. Camelia, like a true Malagueña, would have journeyed to Persia or the South Seas with her act, and no matter how weak or sick she might be—and often she was both—

she was ever the life of the company, smiling and bowing and rattling her castanets to the stamp of her tiny feet. She was a good-hearted little creature, clever and sensible, and although she had a thousand little airs and graces, she used these discreetly; and she danced and sang like an angel.

She had first met Pedro when she was performing at the little theatre of Torrelavega, a village close to his home town, where he was in the habit of going to enjoy the play, of which he was very fond, and to flirt with pretty actresses, of whom he was still fonder.

A few love passages with the pretty Malagueña, a few love tokens, a fond farewell, and a promise to write, and she was gone along the road and almost out of the mind and memory of our hero, when chance and the diligence brought them to new encounter on the post road outside of Llañes. And bereft of all discretion and sense of responsibility as he was at this particular juncture, fascinated anew by La Camelia, and intrigued by the delightful Don Pablo, it did not require much urging from either to induce the scatterbrained Pedro to throw in his lot with these vagabonds, and join their strolling company. He recalled that famous story of Cervantes, in which the nobleman, who fell in love with the gypsy girl, himself turned gypsy in order to be worthy of her love; and was not an actor, even an errant one, far superior to a gypsy, and acting a profession not unworthy of his knightly lineage?

So he sold his mare to a crafty Llañes dealer, and after a shave and a breakfast, received his first lesson in acting from Don Pablo, who coached him so well that

that very night he took his place in the evening performance, as though he had been born and bred to the footlights.

The festival days at Llañes proved to be a little gold mine to the company; and Pedro regarded as a good omen this happy beginning of his adventures. After the evening's performance, he would wander about the countryside with La Camelia, or they would make their way to the fair grounds to partake of the refreshment offered at the big tables, already filled with the local peasantry, pipe in mouth, flagon of beer in hand, talking and laughing and disputing, as the case might be. Here a gigantic old man was punctuating his remarks with terrible pounds upon the table; there another one, with bull-like neck showing above his open blouse, his cap on the back of his head, was bellowing great roars of laughter; a robust damsel, deep-bosomed and wide-ankled, gulped down a great dish of *olla podrida* opposite a country bumpkin with the face of a fool. Some beautiful little children ran in and out among the tables, shouting and laughing; and above all, the innkeeper, with his broad face, as smooth and pink and white as a woman's, beamed benignantly upon his feasting flock. And over and above the sound of the shouting, laughing voices could be heard the constant click, click of dancing heels, and the rattle of tambourines and castanets.

But Pedro and La Camelia, dallying with their cider and filberts, heard nothing save their own whispered love murmurs and half-articulate plans for the future.

Camelia drew aside with repugnance as a hilarious peasant lurched into a chair beside her.

"How disgusting they are! Like a lot of fat pigs, with their beef and their beer. It takes away my appetite just to look at them, these gluttonous Asturians. The Andalusian and Castilian peasants are much more sober and spiritual, and their food far more refined. A bit of *gazpacho*, a few olives, a glass of wine and water! It is not what you eat, but what you enjoy—a mere pretext to talk, to sing, to laugh—" and she gazed soulfully up at Pedro with her great dark eyes.

"Well, as for me," responded Pedro, "I must confess that I enjoy this spectacle of an animal-like life, that is so full of strength and health and robust happiness. Those men, guzzling their cider and beer, gross and red as they are, those peasants with their peaceful and kindly faces, their clean holiday dresses, all have a certain beauty. We see here a people made rich by American money, who are proceeding to enjoy it, even if that enjoyment means nothing but roast pig and pitchers of cider. But this is really life, raw and sensual though it may appear, and disturbed by hoarse laughing and rough voices; there is red blood here and strong muscle, that is going to do much for Spain. I realize this even though, like yourself, I prefer the more mystic and poetic people of Castile. Those graceful figures, enveloped in their flowing capes, those noble, austere faces——!"

When the village festivities had come to an end, the actors took their way to Villaviciosa, and from there passed on to other towns and cities of Castile. The

tales of their adventures and misadventures would make a long story. Through market-places and roads, by trains and diligences, in theatres and backyards, enduring the ignorance of the vulgar, the jokes of peasants, the depredations of thieves and other partially disguised beasts, they endured all with that constant good humour, that stoicism and serenity of soul and spirit which has ever sustained the Spanish people in the hour of adversity or distress.

The life, however, little by little affected the spirit of Pedro—more delicate and less inured to such hardships than the others; he was by turn cynical and mortified; there was, moreover, an undercurrent of melancholy imbedded in the depths of his character which began to manifest itself in curious fits of uncontrollable weeping.

“Pedrito,” cried La Camelia, coming upon him on one of these occasions, and vainly trying to soothe him with loving caresses. “What ails you, dear? Why do you cry? Are you homesick? Don’t you love me any more? Don’t dwell on sad thoughts. Big men don’t cry. If you are unhappy here, let us go away, the two of us together. I am tired of this life also. Let us go to Madrid, the two of us all alone. We can find work there. I would like to go to Madrid. I begin to be afraid that some day I may die by the roadside—or in the middle of a field, like a dog,” and she also burst into frantic weeping; and the two lovers mingled their tears like the two grown children that they were.

The poor Camelia had indeed good reason to weep. Every day she grew paler, thinner, and the little cough,

that once had seemed merely a pretty affectation, now racked her fragile body night and day. Her graceful coquetries and pretty airs came now only after great effort, and at times even her splendid spirit could hardly force them to the surface. Pedro, loving and watching her, beheld all with twitching lips and tightening heart. Finally there came a day when she could no longer dance; but still she coughed and gasped her way through her parts, Pedro supporting her to her entrances, and catching her faltering hands as she groped her unsteady way off the scene.

And then one night she played "Camille." It was a masterly performance—so said the audience; but strange to relate, she did not take her final curtain. The public thought it modesty; they did not know that, pallid as her name flower which rested so quietly upon the bosom that scarcely fluttered, the poor little Camelia lay, unconscious, upon the floor of the rough stage that was to feel her dainty footsteps nevermore.

When she had revived a little, La Chacona and Don Pablo urged her to go to the hospital. There was nothing else to do—so they said. They could not leave her there to die alone in the miserable inn which they were quitting; but the poor little Camelia wept and raved alternately. She did not want to go to the hospital. She was not going to die; if they would only let her leave for Madrid with her lover! There she would soon be well, and they would both be happy.

Don Pablo was furious. Pedro go to Madrid and leave him in the lurch? Not if he could prevent it. The clever old mountebank knew well the value of the

young nobleman's services, for which he paid so little—for Pedro had become a really excellent actor, and would be difficult to replace. So he finally consented to carry along the invalid provided Pedro would pay her way.

He did not have to carry her long, for one night the fragile Camelia folded her drooping petals and poured forth the final fragrance of her sweet and lovely soul.

The anguished Pedro gazed upon the lifeless figure in his arms—the shrunken, waxlike features showing so plainly the sorrow and hunger and hardship which had been the poor Camelia's lot upon earth. He reflected how sad had become that life of freedom upon which he had so recently embarked with such high hopes, and what a difference there was between his real adventures and those depicted in romantic fiction. And sitting there alone through the night by that still and silent form, his sad thoughts went back to his old home in Santillana, and little by little his whole life's panorama spread out in memory before him.

CHAPTER III

HIS memories of his early infancy seemed veiled and lulled by prayer; and through it he beheld, as though in a dream, a very big room, a very wide bed, a window looking out upon an orchard where the trees bent under their weight of rosy apples, and a little beyond some ancient ruins covered with leafy verdure. His later memories were somewhat more precise. He recalled the interior of his father's house—great, silent rooms filled with antique furniture, enormous mirrors, age-darkened family portraits; and then the old village of Santillana, with its deserted streets, seigniorial palaces with many balconies and coats-of-arms over the doorways; the peaceful and silent valley, with its murmuring brooks, a gray and cloudy sky. He could hear, as though they actually sounded in the distance, the tinkle of cowbells, the lowing of cattle, the chiming of the Angelus, the lilt of voices chanting the rosary.

Pedro was born in an immense house, as dark and silent as a monastery inside, its outer walls covered with heraldic emblems. As soon as he could understand, they began to teach him the doctrines and dogmas of religion, and his earliest words were lisping prayers, of whose meaning he was quite ignorant, but the lilting sound of which pleased his baby ears. And

many nights, almost asleep, with his little eyes closed, and his little hands joined, he babbled ancient supplications, fighting back his sleep, obedient to the imperious voice of his father, which echoed heavily through the big rooms of that great house. And praying, praying, he used to wish that they would let him go to sleep. But he was so afraid of his father—so afraid!

This father was a big-hearted man, and loved his family devotedly; but he had a soul of iron, rendered harder by many disappointments and reverses, and he kept all his tenderness within himself. His natural reticence and grave manner were like dikes, which held back all flow of emotion. It seemed as though his soul had turned to flint, which needed to be struck with steel in order to give forth a spark of light. Seldom did any one hear from him a word of praise; and Pedro could never remember having received a kiss from his father. And so the poor boy grew up, a veritable little sensitive plant, and his yearning young soul became so saturated with timidity and fear that he trembled like a leaf at every sharp word. His only comfort and joy was his mother, shy and shrinking like himself, but who loved him with exquisite tenderness, which oftenest expressed itself by the adoring look with which her beautiful eyes followed and caressed him.

That monotonous and serious childhood in a home where there was such dearth of laughter and gaiety left upon his soul the ineradicable imprint of an incurable melancholy. As a boy he had been wont to pass entire hours in complete inaction, watching the river of time flow away in vague desire; and he soon

came to love quiet and silence and isolation. Everybody admired his grave and serious character. "He is a youth who does not know how to laugh," people used to say, making this weighty observation as though it was exquisite praise. He used to like to sit upon a richly carved old chest, listening to the tick of the clock as it echoed through the silent rooms; or the tapping of a woodpecker from without. At other times he used to go down to the monastery on the outskirts of the village below, and amuse himself with silent contemplation of the quaint old carvings of the cloisters, and the mouldering skulls which he found in the grass among the ruined tombstones in the cemetery near by. He used to think that it would be pleasant to live forever in the calm of those ruined cloisters, basking one's soul in silence and solitude. Fleeing from children of his own age, he hid himself in corners to play with little stones and buttons and tiny birds which he made out of paper; or he would station himself for hours in a field, watching an ant-hill and enjoying the humble life of these insects; trying to learn nature's secrets from a tree, from a blade of grass, from a little rill of water. He early learned to read, and after that his principal joy lay in books. His father endeavoured to teach him notions of patriotism, religion, and warfare, his own burning ideals of authority and tradition, his archaic notions of caste; but the poor boy's gentleness and timidity rendered this task a hopeless one, and as soon as he was allowed, he always went back to his books, his insects, his buttons, and his little paper birds.

He had an uncle, Don Rodrigo Villa, a brother of his mother, who always caused him especial terror. This Don Rodrigo was an enormous man, with a long, patriarchal beard, hard of nature, learned, rich, and miserly. He had earned a redoubtable reputation both in peace and war, for he had fought with great valour in his youth, and afterward attained considerable renown as a historian and bibliophile. He lived alone with his books and his money, very proud of himself, his lineage, and his villa. He used to talk and write with a sharp and impetuous eloquence, but moreover a chaste and fine style. The family decided that he was just the proper person to undertake the education of his nephew, and the latter could recall how he set him down upon his iron knees, and in a voice like thunder began to recount to the frightened child great stories of bygone wars; at another time he led him through the picture gallery with its old family portraits by Greco and Coello and Pantoja, who, it appeared, lived in the shadow of a great immortality—and recounted to the boy wonderful legendary tales of the family, and heroic deeds performed for king, country, or church. The fiery Don Rodrigo actually bristled during these tales. His hands trembled, and his greenish eyes burned with a strange light. The poor boy, half dead with fear, threw himself on his knees before his terrible mentor, whose educational methods were so terrifyingly martial.

“You’re got to harden this young man,” blustered the old soldier to his weeping sister, when she came to plead with him for her frightened little boy. “You’ve

got to begin hardening them young! What are you bringing him up to be? Are you going to educate him to be a monk? I would rather see him dead than a coward! These modern notions of education make me sick; you would think that the boys were young ladies in a fashionable seminary! As the great Iñigo so well says: 'The whole of life is war and battle, and we should bring up our boys to be men fit for the struggle, and not effeminate dolls.' "

When Pedro was seven years old his idolized mother died, leaving behind her a little daughter. With the passing of this sweet woman, who had spent the final years of her life in a mild insanity, the great house lost the only tenderness which dwelt within it, and poor little Pedro exchanged the gentle love of his mother, who, even though demented, still adored and fondled him, for the frigid care of a housekeeper, a simple, gloomy peasant woman.

Sadder and more lonely than ever, the orphan boy retreated into solitude, as though concealing his very presence in the house. His father, rendered more bitter and austere than ever by the death of his wife, shut himself up in his own rooms, leaving the care of his children to hirelings. And now Pedro lost all track of time in an immense childish idleness; growing daily more indolent and melancholy, he huddled by himself in the orchard, watching the trickling waters of the fountain, and learning to enjoy the miraculous silence of that enchanted villa, that great sepulchre of dead glories and ancient memories, which was the only thing he knew as home.

At the age of eight Pedro changed his cloister, passing from his father's house to a Brothers' school, an ancient monastery hidden among the neighbouring mountains. In that new convent, under rigid, scholarly discipline, among cold courtyards and vast lecture halls, the poor child felt himself more abandoned than ever. Now, on the other hand, he could never be alone—always there were eyes upon him, supervising eyes, cold, correcting eyes. The yoke of discipline bore heavily upon his laziness and timidity; he rose at dawn, and half dead with cold and sleepiness, he made his stumbling way to the chapel, and from that hour the entire day alternated between lessons and recreation, everything tuned to the stroke of a bell.

He left this school at the age of fourteen, a grave, pallid youth, with intelligent, dreamy eyes. By this time he had lost a good deal of his timidity, but on returning to his father's house, the sad memories of his infancy, the severities of his education—which had been mingled with the teasing and hazing of his schoolmates—those long years of mingled piety and violence—had all left deep marks upon his heart and character.

All his old love of out of doors returned to him, and he passed long hours stretched upon the grass, breathing in the soft odours of the meadows or hiding himself in the woods; or wandering at length over the lonely mountains; but these physical activities, which were so good for him, were often ended by fits of weeping and hours of deep melancholy. And now again books became the safety-valve of his ardent imagination, his youthful

mind unfolding without curb or direction over volumes of history or legend; he read voraciously, books of religion and fantasy, histories and novels. In his soul he felt strange impulses, an insatiable curiosity. He avoided his father, but often sought out his sister, Casilda, and his cousin, Juliana, a little brunette of his own age; to them he read poetry in a grandiloquent manner, and recounted to them for as long as they would listen his own lofty dreams. At other times he would sink into profound thought, and read and re-read the devotional books left by his mother, filled as they were with dissertations upon death, ascetic philosophy, and the sadness of living. These thoughts filled Pedro with terror and curiosity in regard to life and living; it seemed as though this must be a thing full of mysteries, dangers, and prohibitions, where one could not look oneself in the face without blushing—like the hidden charms of a very wicked and a very beautiful woman.

Without knowing it, Pedro was beginning to experience the first sensations of youthful love; he was consumed by indefinite longings, strange exaltations, which alternately delighted and tormented him. And one day all these indefinite sentiments centred themselves upon one object, his cousin Juliana, young, pretty, and ardent, who became the object of his sad and romantic love.

Juliana was the daughter of a near relative of the Ceballos, another old-time nobleman, Don Fernando Perez de Orcasitas. She noted his affection without being aware of its depths and intensities, and soon she

in turn developed for him an equally romantic attachment. The two ignorant young things carefully guarded their secret like a sacred relic in the inmost sanctuary of their hearts, as though afraid that, if exposed, it would lose some of the religious mystery, the sanctity and ardour which so sweetly tormented them.

At the age of seventeen Pedro's father decided to send him to the University to study law. And now the boy entered upon a world of contrasts from that dead villa which had passed through so many pious and petrified centuries of sleep. He found himself in a great city, where modern ideas, luxury, and wealth surrounded him. Here was happy youth, disporting itself with scholarly license, the sons of a rich bourgeoisie, whose ideas were all of to-day—sometimes of to-morrow—spending itself in freedom of living; and talking of fashion, literature, women, vices, and rebellion against everything that was not of the moment.

When the young student came home for his vacation the family found a great change in him. The timid and misanthropic youth, heavy of manner and of few words, had now become a dapper and debonair young man of the world, with fine manners and finer clothes, of which he was apparently most proud. He immediately began making fun of the old-fashioned ways of his home people, and caused the girls not a little pain and mortification by the disdainful and petulant manner in which he criticized things. He even became sufficiently bold to argue with his father and disagree with him concerning matters of art and history and even religion. He talked passionately

of new ideas, modern thought, and "holy liberty," until the old gentleman began to regret that he had ever thought of sending his son to college, and debated within himself as to whether it might not be advisable to refuse him permission to return; but when he considered the vast improvement in all other ways that the youth had made, fatherly pride overcame his convictions. So at the end of his holidays he made no objection to the youth's return.

But alas, he soon began to receive unpleasant news of the young student, for the professors began to send complaints of bad conduct, pride, laziness, obstinacy, rebelliousness, and they even threatened that, unless he mended his ways, expulsion might be the penalty. A little later word came that he had incited the other students to rebellion, that there had been almost a riot in the lecture hall, and that, as he was going to the bad completely, his father had better bring him home and keep him under his own eye. The old hidalgo furiously ordered his son home, and Pedro returned as gay and debonair as before, treating the whole affair with scornful disdain. He now devoted his entire time to hunting and lovemaking, following up every pretty face, and frightening the simple country people by his audacities.

His father treated him with his utmost severity, even to the point of beating him; apparently submissive, grave, quiet, calm, he rendered a frigid obedience to his father, which, however, was entirely on the surface, for inwardly he rebelled against this parental discipline, and nourished a constantly growing desire to break away forever from this prison of his youth.

The old hidalgo mourned over him in secret, and tried in vain to solve the mystery of the great and apparently unaccountable change that had so completely altered the character of his formerly mild and timid son.

Juliana, Pedro's cousin, was a charming young woman, slender, good-looking, and of a stately carriage, and possessing fine qualities of character. The strange and unaccountable behaviour of her sweetheart caused her deep suffering, but her love for him was so great that her hope and trust never wavered, and she refused to censure him with the others. Both parents approved of the match, especially Pedro's father, who felt that, once married and with a home of his own, the riotous and rebellious youth would settle into placid and respectful domesticity—the usually expected fruitage of a crop of wild oats. Therefore, the old nobleman urged a speedy wedding, and this would probably have occurred had not the foolhardiness of the son interfered with these well-laid plans.

In the neighbouring town of Torrelavega there appeared a troupe of wandering players; thither on their "first night" came Pedro; came and saw the beautiful Camelia; saw, and was conquered. Thereafter for Pedro there was only one road out of Santillana—the highway to Torrelavega. Heads shook and tongues wagged, and the scandal scattered broadcast; but little did it matter to our hero.

And then one night he disappeared completely, and for many years Santillana knew him no more.

CHAPTER IV

FOR some weeks following the death of La Camelia Pedro was sunk in the deepest melancholy; for a time he even contemplated suicide. But the restorative powers of youth are great, and after a while he listened to the solicitations of some well-meaning friends who prevailed upon him to accompany them to Madrid, whither they were going.

They were a gay crowd, and they carried the youth with them into the night life of the metropolis—he protesting at first; but soon, with one of those swift transitions of which he was capable, plunging wildly into the most vivid phases of their undisciplined living. At times, however, he felt a longing for the old, free life of the roads; and at others his thoughts went back to his father and his father's house, although he still shrank with terror from the idea of returning to that gloomy tomb.

Then he would launch into new adventures and extravagances when he was in funds. There were, however, times when he knew both hunger and cold; but he was always sustained by his old-time pride, that pride which, rather than submit to honourable subordination, had subjected him to the deepest humiliations.

He tried one job after another, until finally he landed

in the editorial rooms of a newspaper—that city of refuge of the outcasts of the world. Here his good education, knowledge of the world, and an innate cleverness of pen rapidly brought him to the front, and he began to be filled with ambitions toward a real literary career—that most difficult and ill-rewarded and fugitive of all the glories of this world. But the idea tickled his vanity, and it was pleasant to be thrown in contact, as he was, with men of letters, and achieve a certain name of his own in this little world.

But all talent is fruitless unless backed by application and strength of will. Both of these Pedro lacked; he was too impatient, romantic, impulsive; he wanted to reach the heights without climbing, and only the heights would satisfy his ardent and undisciplined imagination, which was always dreaming of greater things than he could possibly perform. In addition to this, his desultory reading, misdirected ideals, and the excitement of the night life which he led distracted his thoughts and exaggerated his inherited tendency to hysteria. In the office he was regarded as brilliant and erratic rather than dependable, and he endured the humiliation of seeing the slow but plodding promoted over his head. Jealous and embittered, he began to pose as an unappreciated genius, and he neglected his real work to waste his talent upon lampoons and parodies.

Criticism at first irritated and then depressed him, and now he began to show evidence of a renewal of the timidity which had harassed his youth. He began to meditate anew upon suicide; life began to seem insuf-

ferable. It seemed as though his soul was escaping from him little by little. Unable to endure any longer the restrictions of office routine, his spirit overwhelmed by his old-time laziness and vagabondage, he soon might have starved, had not a new passion just at this moment come into his life.

He had left Madrid, and was wandering through the little towns of Andalusia, when in one of these he happened upon a remarkable woman. Rosa Luna was a Cuban of Spanish parents, whom she lost early in life, to be adopted by some relatives who took her first to Paris and later to Barcelona. She had a fine mind, and her foster parents gave her an education unusual for a woman in those times and parts. On leaving the University, she taught for a time, and then began writing until her marriage with a man who, though vulgar, possessed an unusual mind, which had fascinated her with its talent. But the union proved unhappy, and on separating from her husband she fell in with a group of University revolutionaries, who soon converted her to their doctrines, of which she became the ardent mouthpiece, with the utter abandon of a woman who has broken through the conventional traces of a rigid society.

She was a tiny little woman, dark and terribly nervous, brave and impetuous, and without fear of criticism or consequences. Persecuted and derided, often in risk of her life, she went about preaching her revolutionary doctrines, and fulminating prophecies and anathemas against those who were holding back from the world "*the new day*" of a better era. Between

these Philippics she used to retire to Barcelona, where she edited a newspaper and conducted a sort of school, which gained her a meagre living and helped to disseminate the doctrines which she believed in with all the ardour of a great mind and a truly big and kind heart. She possessed the elements of martyrdom, and cheerfully would have gone to the stake for her principles such as they were.

It was a beautiful twilight on the shores of the Guadalquivir; night was falling gently, and the final rays of the sun were shimmering through the lattice-work of leafy olive boughs, under which a great group of peasants listened, open-mouthed and fascinated by the fiery woman who exhorted them. They could not quite understand the words of her romantic oration, her fervid exaltation, but the charm and vigour of her tiny personality, the trembling gestures of her fluttering little hands, the energy and animation that enveloped her impressed even their lethargic souls. The air was tense. Just at this moment there appeared a little group of angry objectors, accompanied by a couple of bailiffs, who ordered the crowd to disperse. The listening labourers responded by a volley of sticks and stones—the bailiffs with shots from their revolvers, and in another moment there was a riot. Pedro, who had been one of the most fascinated of Rosa Luna's auditors, sprang out of the crowd to the assistance of the tiny orator and her elderly companion, who were in imminent danger of being trampled in the fighting; and just then the Civil Guard rode up, armed with a warrant for the arrest of Rosa Luna (charged with

inciting anarchy and violence), and such of her companions as they might be able to apprehend. Pedro had the honour of accompanying her.

Their love, born in a prison, united these two visionaries for a long time. Pedro, fascinated by this brilliant and vehement woman who had come into his life under such novel and romantic circumstances, felt himself completely dominated by her. Himself weak of will and soft of character, Rosa Luna was his exact complement. Accustomed in the past only to egotistical and voracious men, men vulgar and practical in life and love, she was enchanted by this gallant and poetic youth, capable of risking his own life and liberty for a lady and an ideal. She found in his soul seeds of the heroism which she professed and adored, and longing for the love of a man's heart and the protection of his company, she ardently welcomed him into her life. Together they wandered through Andalusia, sharing the risks and adventures of this singular union.

His love for Rosa Luna marked a new epoch in the life of Pedro de Ceballos. Sensitive as he was to every new emotion, he plunged with characteristic frenzy into that tidal wave of revolution—sentimental and religious in its elements—which flooded the world at the beginning of the century. After a period of romantic wandering the two lovers settled down in the humble little house at Barcelona, writing and teaching and cultivating their love and their ideals. In that serene and peaceful retreat, Pedro took up his studies again, and it seemed as though the tempest and tumults of his life had calmed forever. The mellow influence

of love and maternity—for a child had been born to them—softened and soothed the fiery soul of Rosa Luna. Her friends used to say that, so greatly had she changed they hardly knew her. The doughty revolutionist now lived quietly and simply, adoring and caring for her little son; her heart, her speech, her pen lost all their former violence, and that soaring love which once had aspired to embrace the whole of humanity now narrowed and concentrated itself upon her child.

The little idyl was short-lived. The fruit of those wandering loves was not destined to mature. After a few months of weakly existence, the child died. Frantic with grief, and desperately seeking oblivion therefrom, Rosa Luna plunged anew into the maelstrom of political and revolutionary activity, Pedro as ever following her lead. And now their deeply overwrought natures carried them to the most excessive extremes of anarchy and rebellion, until after a series of persecutions and arrests they at length had to flee from their home and even their country.

Aided by friends, they managed to escape to Paris, where they eked out a meagre and precarious existence in an out-of-the-way corner of the Latin Quarter; where they formed part of a small group of revolutionaries and idealists—most of them expatriates like themselves, who nightly gathered in the studio of a Polish violinist, Demetrio Sobieski. Like most of his compatriots, the musician was violent and sentimental, genial and extravagant—an undoubted, though as yet unrecognized, genius.

A Russian writer, named Catherine, tall, fair, pallid, aristocratic, who had been obliged to flee from her home in Riga on account of her revolutionary utterances, shared his exile and his poverty, sustaining herself as best she could by teaching languages, music, and literature. The similarity of their destinies attracted the two queerly mated couples to each other, and they developed an affectionate friendship.

The rest of the group consisted of Hans Keller, an enormous German, with flowing yellow locks and a gravity of demeanour that bordered upon melancholy. He was a great pessimist, and a greater beer-drinker. He hardly ever opened his lips, all his enthusiasms and exaltations expressing themselves through his large blue eyes, that gazed out upon the world with mingled timidity and reproach; Jean Jaques Robin, a French poet, as yet almost unknown to the world, but possessed of the true fire of genius, inspired the group with his exquisite phrases and mystic revelations; and an old Russian prince, a Nihilistic friend of Catherine's, and a couple of impressionistic painters, protégés of Robin, completed this circle of fraternal spirits, who were wont to discuss every subject, human and divine, from philosophy to politics, from art to the humanities. They were all filled with a common exaltation and extravagant dreaminess, overflowing with enthusiasms which they spent their evenings expounding with incendiary eloquence. Robin was usually the ultimate mouth-piece of the company, especially for Keller, whose slow and heavy Germanic renderings of transcendental philosophy the Gallic poet translated into exquisite,

golden phrases. Then Catherine, passing her delicate hands through her rich blonde locks, and darting lightning from her greenish eyes, would take the floor and pour forth from the depths of her bitter soul a torrent of Nihilistic rebellion. This usually fired Rosa Luna to a similar burst of revolutionary eloquence, which Pedro would follow up with milder speech, usually half-humorous recollections of his experiences as student, actor, journalist, and revolutionary; and at the last, the speakers worn out by their own eloquence and emotion, Demetrio Sobieski would rise and, passing his trembling bow above the vibrating chords of his Stradivarius, draw forth the *vox humana* of its soul, while Catherine softly accompanied him on the piano in those laments of Tchaikowski, wherein seems to wail the soul of all Russia—the dreams of Tolstoi, the trembling visions of Dostoieweski, the epic grandeur of Gogol, the Bohemianism of Gorki, and the tender delicacy of Turgueneff.

Pedro, always fond of music, and now enchanted by the exquisite playing of Demetrio, had taken up with the latter the study of the violin. Chopin, with his exquisite mixture of Slavic fantasy, German richness, and Latin eloquence, was his idol, the exquisite tenderness and pathetic sorrow of his music producing a profound impression upon the soul of the Spaniard. His Ballades, Scherzos, Improvisations, and Nocturnes seemed to express in terms of music Pedro's innermost soul, an insatiable soul, tender, dreamy, romantic.

CHAPTER V

THIS life of music, of love, of wine and adventure, of books and of dreams, exalted Pedro enormously, inspiring him to new madresses; and fired by the ardours and the arguments of Rosa Luna and her fellow rebels, he launched again into revolutionary conflicts, and as a result was persecuted, harassed, and frequently imprisoned.

And so passed months of an excited and unsatisfactory existence. Sometimes, on thinking things over, he deeply regretted his errors, and reflected upon what a fine thing it would be to become a practical man, and he began to plan how some day he would go into business or initiate great projects, and seek out men of action, instead of associating with poor wretches, who, like himself, dealt mainly in misty dreams, which carried them oftener to jail than to fortune. And then, stirred by the instinctive desire of the propagandist and the revolutionary, to educate, to cultivate, to lead, he decided that he would take up teaching—he who had not been able to educate or cultivate himself. And so he founded a sort of Socratic school, conducted in the open air, without rules or methods or regulations. The fame of his talent and his oratory brought him a few pupils; but he soon tired of teaching, as he had tired of everything else in life.

And now thinking people began to accuse him of sophistry, of charlatanism. This, however, was not entirely deserved, for in spite of his vagaries, he had a great and genuine desire to know and understand truth; but his soul was filled with confusion, and within him fought perpetually the warring elements of fire, irony, sadness, and indolence; he seemed to be without the strength either to affirm or deny; he was continually contradicting himself, and being instinctively honest, he felt that it was an injustice to the youths confided to his care to continue further to deceive them.

He resembled somewhat that famous doctor of philosophy who, after having spent an entire semester teaching Metaphysics to his class, one day solemnly said to them: "Gentlemen, I am not altogether sure whether there is such a thing as Metaphysics," and then continued calmly expounding Metaphysics the rest of his life. Pedro, however, more honest and sincere, dispersed his classes and bade his pupils farewell.

And now, overcome by a sudden burst of homesickness, he decided to return to Spain. Rosa Luna had died suddenly from a mysterious ailment, and his life in Paris had become unbearable to him. So he returned to Madrid, broken-down and disillusioned. He looked out upon the ruins of his youth, and the spectacle filled him with terror. He saw himself passing along the road to age, lonely, without love, without companionship, without happiness, or the glory of achievement.

Few men had started out in youth better endowed and equipped than he. He had sampled all the wine-

cups of life, had tasted of existence at all its fountains; he had spent the generous fortune of youth without having received in return anything save disillusionment. And now, filled with strange fears, without health or ideals, he hid away his broken pride, his sorrow, and his poverty in a remote corner of Madrid.

And there one day light entered in upon his heart and his understanding. From the depths of his being there arose an intense desire, as swiftly soaring as an eagle, a noble desire for peace, repose, renunciation. It seemed as though a life of thought and quiet was the simple that would heal his soul. At last, though late, he understood himself, his failings and his misfortunes. Looking back upon his early life, he saw how from his very cradle he had been surrounded by the mild insanity of his mother, by the sadness of his father. A child of infirmity and calamity, he had striven, like so many other Spaniards, to disown his destiny and his caste, instead of dedicating himself, as he should have, to its restoration and reformation, and engrafting upon the ancient tree the health and sanity of youth. His thoughts went back with sudden tenderness and emotion to that far-away childhood and the remote mountain corner in which he was born. And now as he sat through the night before the open window of his room, the brilliant arc lamps illuminating the spectacle of the night-life before him, he saw it for the first time in its true colours: laden with artifices and vices; women of the street, painted, vicious, accompanied by men equally vicious and vulgar; old men with dyed hair and flaccid flesh, young men already on the highway

to degeneracy; parvenus newly enriched and rapidly wasting those riches; politicians and revolutionaries; and all of them, men and women, the youthful and the aged, moving in an atmosphere of folly and hypocrisy.

That picture which once had so fascinated Pedro, the brilliant light in which he had singed his wings, now seemed an allegory of the flame which had consumed his youth, his health, his courage. The very faces seemed to take on a spectral aspect, and to Pedro's irradiated vision they assumed the appearance of having been ravaged by sickness or the grave; and now upon them hovered, as though materialized, a manifestation of their inner psychologies—wariness, misfortune, viciousness, brutality, broken ideals and buried dreams, all of which in the light of a material day were hidden by a smile, a laugh, a leer.

Oh, for the serenity of a happy and peaceful life, health of body, repose of soul! The quiet of fields, the tranquillity of blue skies, the silence of snow-capped peaks, the breath of sleeping seas, the sequestered cloister of Santillana! Why, oh, why does the heart yearn to flee from its native nest, wherein dwell peace and contemplation and healthy love? A soft and grave voice from afar seemed to call upon Pedro to go back to his own home, to the simple sights and sounds of his origin.

With his soul in his pen, he wrote his father a letter, a short, brave, sincere letter, to which he received an answer by return of mail, a letter equally short, brave, and sincere. It contained a check sufficient to cover all expenses, and an exhortation to return home at once.

Through the lines of this epistle Pedro could read the tale of a deep, constrained emotion, which moved him to tears, for it brought to his mind a picture of his stern, austere father stirred to the depths of his soul by a new tenderness born of a breaking heart. It did not take long for Pedro to pack his few belongings and to make his way to the railway station. And as the train drew out, he felt like an imprisoned bird who sees the door of his cage opening before him.

It was evening, and the train sped into a wonderful golden sunset; it seemed to Pedro, looking at it through the window, as though he was speeding into a promised land. Twenty years of his life suddenly fell away from him, and he looked at everything with the eyes of youth; everything seemed new, hopeful, wonderful, beautiful, and his thoughts flew away before him like swallows seeking out their old nest at Santillana.

As night drew on he retired into his compartment with a volume of Escalante, that virile, wandering poet of the mountain; and the soft music of his verses delighted his soul with its health and robust lyricism, so different from that sickly poetry to which he had been for so long accustomed. The verses of this mountain nobleman seemed like another comforting and inspiring voice, which chanted to him as though by a miracle, and comforted and prepared his spirit for its entrance into his old home. Lulled by their lilt, and quieted by their fine philosophy, the prodigal son sank back upon his pillow and slept tranquilly.

A little after midnight the sudden stopping of the train at a wayside station awakened him, and he went

out for a few turns up and down the platform, basking in the fresh breeze and the soft night under a star-filled sky which watched over the silent countryside. Off in the distance he could faintly discern a group of low houses, a little village where the only sign of life was the crowing of the cock—the great plains of Castile spread out before him silent as an ocean of frozen waters. The shrill whistling of the locomotive brought Pedro back to his railway carriage, which with a groan and a sigh started once more into motion, the station platform gliding into a series of twinkling lights which finally disappeared into the distance. And Pedro, lulled by the motion of the train, again fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER VI

THE gentle breath of dawn awakened him. Through the window of his compartment he gazed out upon well-ploughed mountain fields, misty countrysides, leafy slopes, and peaceful valleys, all bathed in the soft light of early morning.

The sun-parched plains of the palentine, and the splendid summits of Reinosa—"those porticoes of Spain"—were now left far behind, and the train ploughed its speedy way across the dew-drenched fields of Barceña.

Pedro felt himself stirred by a sudden joy, and his heart seemed ready to burst with an ecstasy of emotion that trumpeted like glad hosannas through his soul. As though his life had been suddenly transformed by some strange power, he found his spirit basking in a serenity and harmony as soft and sweet and gently tonic as the humid breath of the dawn that bathed his brow.

It seemed as though he never could have been either sick or sad. The past—even the events of the night before—lengthened, diminished, disappeared. His soul became delightfully calm, soothed by the serenity of vast horizons, the silent depths of valleys, the murmur of unseen waters, the clearness of a sky, where, veiled in vapours, lingered a lazy sun. He was a boy again—

his violent soul at rest; as a cataract rests in the shallow after the roar of the whirlpool.

The train rushed along, splitting the sweet silence of the countryside, with its whistling and roaring, through narrow gorges and flowery plateaux, reverberating in the sonorous echo of glens; delighting itself in the fertility of secluded meadows; lingering at wayside stations, where leisurely peasants, clutching blue umbrellas, chattered in their pure and melodious mountain accent.

There could be heard a murmur of rivulets flowing through bowery tunnels, the jerking and jolting of windmills, the lowing of cattle. The early morning breeze wafted sweet country odours: resin, mint, chamomile, furze, henna, and wild roses—pleasant whiffs from granaries and barns. . . .

And now there passed before the window in rapid review an ancient manor house with broad roof and lordly portal; graceful bridges spanning leafy water-courses; a heavy cart with swaying bundles of new-mown hay, and a groan as to its axles; peaceful peasant women splashing their week's wash in rivers which scattered upon their shores the beads of their white mills; a manorial tower with sharp battlements and stone escutcheons—"*rotted by the moon*" as the saying goes; a fountain of rustic design whither sauntered straight, lithe country girls, pitcher on head, hands on hips, like figures in a biblical picture; palaces and hovels, thickets and meadows, mountains and plains, rocks and woodlands, all flashed by like visions in a dream. A hummed song, rich with the passion of the

jota,* mellowed by the cadences of the *praviana*,* sounded in passing, like an errant melancholy which implanted the arrow of love in the soul of the traveller.

The morning was well advanced when the train arrived at the distinguished manor of la Vega. Here ended his railroad journey, so Pedro left the train, and walked along the wagon road to a little inn, which he perceived near by. A wide door, divided into two parts, gave access to a spacious entrance hall. There he saw a girl with red cheeks and humble blue-green eyes, carrying a basket of apples, and two peasants with blue woollen caps pulled over their eyes, eating in silence. The sight of the basket, the healthy aspect of the food upon which the peasants were gorging, the penetrating aroma of ripe apples, all brought to the traveller memories of the past: memories sweet and sad, beloved treasures which were "sweet and happy when God wished"; like those great earthen jars which standing in the wide portal of the Lord of Miranda kept alive for the knight of La Mancha memories of his Dulcinea.

And while these sights filled Pedro with a swift homesickness, they at the same time stimulated a sudden appetite. Remembering that he had eaten nothing since the night before, he called to the wrinkled, dried-up old chatelaine of the inn, who at that moment made her appearance, requesting that she serve him with breakfast.

She invited him into an inner room, and there made

*National dance music of Spain.

ready a table plying him, meanwhile, with a torrent of questions, in her cracked old voice.

"Are you going very far, sir?"

"Yes—very," replied Pedro in a forbidding tone.

"May I inquire, sir, if you will be in need of a carriage?"

"Yes, I shall need a carriage to take me to Santillana."

"Is it possible that you are from Santillana?" cried the old woman, with quick interest.

"Yes—I am."

"Oh, sir! I also was born in Santillana—and there I spent my early years—as girl—and bride—and your face, dear young sir—your eyes, your forehead, your nose, your mouth, are those of my dear old master Don Juan Manuel de Ceballos!"

"My father!" exclaimed Pedro.

"Mother of God!" shrieked the old woman, overjoyed. "Is it possible! Are you the little Pedro? So grown up! Such a man! Why, I haven't laid eyes on you since you were less than twenty years old! But I thought God wouldn't let me die without seeing you again!"

And hereupon she threw her old arms around him, and bathed his hands with her kisses and tears. "But don't you remember me, little master? Don't you remember Quica—who dandled you on her knee—who taught you to make paper dicky birds, to whistle—to fish for trout—who used to carry your love letters to Miss Liana; who. . . ."

"Remember you, Quica? Indeed, I do! And I

can't tell you how much I have always appreciated all your goodness to me. And my dear mother was very fond of you."

"Oh, my poor dear lady!" The good Quica began wiping her eyes on her apron.

"But how do you happen to be here in Torrelavega?" inquired Pedro.

"You remember my son Nardo, who used to hunt and fish with you? Well, he got a job in the station here, and so I opened this inn with my savings. But, here, I haven't even told my husband! He must be in the orchard. I'll run out and call him. Sindo! Sindo! Who do you suppose is here? Don Pedro, the son of Don Manuel of Santillana!"

Sindo came as quickly as his old legs would carry him. He was a sagacious little old man, with a feline mouth and jaw.

He welcomed Pedro warmly, pressing his hands in both of his, and recounting at great length his long years of service in the house of Don Manuel.

"Our dear young master Pedro," exclaimed Quica. "May God bless him! See how handsome he has grown! If only he wasn't so thin! And with so many gray hairs! And he is so young! Son of my life! He can't be forty yet!"

And the little old woman, trembling in her excitement, bustled about, opening windows, moving chairs, while Pedro gazed affectionately upon the two grotesque little old people.

"My God!" murmured Quica. "Holy Virgin Mother, how time does fly! And it all seems like yesterday.

But there; what are we idling here for without giving the young master a bite to eat? Quick, Sindo, go fetch a bottle of wine! And I have a fresh roasted chicken that would do your heart good to look at! And without my even knowing that the young master was coming!”

“Thanks, Quica. Bring me anything at all. The food of the country people. I am not particular.”

She had the table laid in a jiffy; a silver service extracted from the archives, a spray of flowers, a basket of fruit, a compote of preserves. In the centre the steaming roast chicken; and like a guard of honour, two bottles of wine and a jug of milk.

Pedro, though delighted, protested against so many honours; but the good woman laughingly insisted, coming and going from dining room to kitchen, from table to cupboard with the liveliness and agility of a girl of fifteen.

Was he sure nothing was lacking? Because if it were necessary even the bells in the new church should be set ringing! And did he think that when after all these years the young master at last had entered the doors of Quica's poor house, as a king deigns to enter the hut of a shepherd, that he was going to be treated the same as those ragamuffins of farmers out in the entry? If she had to pitch the whole house out of the window—not that it mattered——!

Of all those dainties that which appealed most to Pedro was the enormous cups of milk fresh from the cow. On tasting the delicious flavour of that milk, warm, aromatic, mellow, faintly tinged with an essence

of mountain herbs, he also felt mellowed, warmed, as though by a tonic of well-being.

The fields which he beheld through the broad window, the pale northern sunlight which bathed the lattices, the emotions and fatigue of his journey; this rustic serenity; the unexpected meeting and pleasant reflection, filled him with happiness and peace.

When he had finished his meal he made the affectionate Quica sit down beside him, and begged her for word of his father, his home, his village.

"I haven't had news in a long time," he said, sadly. "I've been travelling—ill——"

"I heard that the señorito had left Spain."

"Yes, that was true! But tell me. How is my father?"

"My dear Don Juan is well: a little sad and depressed, but as strong as an oak. They tell me he hardly ever leaves the house: stays shut up there like a monk. And Silda? A wonderful girl! As beautiful and as proud as a royal princess! Your cousin Liana? Oh, you rascal! You wouldn't forget her! I'll be bound! Well, she's very handsome—but—she doesn't seem the same. They say she wants to become a nun; but since her father is blind——"

"Blind! Don Fernando?"

"Oh! So you hadn't heard? Yes, overnight, of amaurosis. He wakened, screamed, and there he was, blind! But God has given him such resignation. Don Rodrigo? Just as much of a grumbler and bully as ever. Andrea is still living there with them as of old. And now I don't think I have any more news for you, señorito."

While Sindo went out to look for a carriage to carry Pedro to Santillana, the young man sat down with Quica in the doorway. A long string of carts filed down the road, the grave, heavy carters walking with their staffs resting on their shoulders; groups of country-people were returning from market, their empty baskets slung across their backs; and a herd of red cows trailed along behind, their bells tinkling sweetly in the summer air.

In the door-yard of the inn a troop of hens picked and pecked, while a handsome black rooster with golden spurs strutted among them, his crimson crest stiff with pride; while beyond a little pink pig scuttled about rooting and grunting under the very legs of an ass, gravely philosophizing beneath the boughs of an apple-tree; in the sunny doorway lounged a white cat, her unblinking eyes fixed upon a flock of sparrows hopping and whirling just beyond her reach, while a great brown-and-white dog slumbered at her side. A flock of doves whirled just above them, and a brood of mallards cackled about their paws in insolent audacity. It seemed as though in this peaceful country all living things mingled in an intimate brotherhood unknown elsewhere since the days of the Ark.

The arrival of Sindo with the carriage, an ancient chaise and pair, was the signal for affectionate leave-takings, and with a final farewell and many embraces Pedro entered the conveyance and started on the final lap of his journey home. They traversed the noble city of Torrelavega and the broad plain where the rivers Saja and Besaya mingle in one broad stream;

crossed this by the bridge of San Miguel, and entered a fertile valley dotted with little villas at the end of which rose the mountains of Bispieres, with its famous castle and watch-tower. As they drew nearer to Santillana the country took on that aspect of grace and austere aridity so typical of Castile. Gone were the murmuring orchards, the leafy groves of chestnut trees, the valleys sprinkled with villages and settlements: here towered the massive mountain, his rugged shoulders stripped of all verdant vestments, his rocky ribs as bare as a lean and naked giant's.

As they approached his native village Pedro felt an even greater intensifying of the already keen emotions which the sight of these familiar scenes had evoked. A turn of the road and Santillana appeared before him, peeping out between the trees and vines of the valley like a well-beloved old face.

Overcome with an indefinable thrill, Pedro ordered the carriage to a halt, and "with his soul on its knees," as they say in Spain, he stood for a long time gazing upon his home-country, both so beautiful and so sorrowful. It had clouded over and now began to rain; country odours arose from the wet earth, and an atmosphere of deep melancholy spread itself over the village. The Angelus sounding forth from the belfry of the neighbouring church heightened the effect. A feeling of repose, a peace that was not of this world, descended like a cloud, and sweetly enfolded the soul of Pedro. Everything seemed to recede into the past: the fields of Revolgo with their faint murmur of trees and fountains, the quiet monastery which held vigil at the

entrance of the town, the venerable church watching over the aging village, the crumbling towers, the decrepit façades, the austere countryside, the silent village, the gray sky weeping tiny tears. All these brought to him the memory of far-away things as though suddenly the river of Time had been turned out of its course.

And now at last he beheld the home in which he was born; the old cypresses of the orchards among the ruins—and the words of a song which he had learnt in his childhood came into his mind.

THE SECOND JOURNEY
THE TEARS OF THINGS

CHAPTER I

DON JUAN MANUEL DE CEBALLOS Y ESCALANTE was a nobleman after the fashion of the old-time hidalgos of Castille—with a florid face, a strange head of bristling hair, and a robust figure, who seemed to have been torn out of a comedy by Calderón or a painting by Greco. He was more than seventy years of age, but he still was tall, hardy, with austere features, high forehead, aquiline nose, bright eyes, a gray moustache and goatee, and a general air of arrogance about his entire person. He usually wore loosely fitting dark garments, but his face and figure demanded the seventeenth century Castilian ruff, doublet, and small clothes, while his dry and nervous hands seemed reaching out for a blade from Toledo; and the tall slouch hat with which he covered his grizzled head only lacked a plume to complete a picture of the time of one of the Philips. He was a fine old gentleman, sober and sensible in his habits and customs, orderly and exact in thought, discreet and delicate in his affairs, but all of these qualities were over-laid by a sort of dryness. Some people accused him of lacking sensitiveness and tenderness, but they did not understand the depth of true sentiment which hovered beneath his sharp and brusque exterior. Those gifted with understanding might

have read in his face a tale of silent sorrow, lack of appreciation, and pride. His firm and closely shut mouth and somewhat disdainful carriage suggested a great but embittered soul which had risen above all the little-nesses of this life—a great soul, like those of the old-time heroes. He was a descendant of those ancient Ceballos who are so gallantly depicted in the old ballad-ry of Spain; Castilians of pure race, who defended their own castles rather than assault those of others; who resisted rather than attacked, firm and loyal men, who would rather kill a beloved child with their own hands than see him dishonourable or disloyal. They were heroic men, silent, serene, stoical; superior to all adversity, strong of heart, courageous, proud, and courteous.

And this present old knight of the Ceballos was as rigid and proud as they, ready for any heroism, and calmly enduring disappointment and defeat.

His manners, like his expression, were grave and solemn. He spoke a rich and classic Castilian, simple and elegant, and without being in any way literary, he wrote with fine and elevated style, so that his letters were models of pure and pithy language. He published an occasional monograph upon the history of his family, or his villa, which were highly prized by the learned, not only for their accuracy and exactness of content, but also for their wisdom and elegance. He was deeply read in the Classics and Humanities, but like most Spaniards, was strictly conservative, frowning down new ideas, and firmly believing in the "Divine Right" of kings and caste.

In his youth he had been extremely handsome, and

there still lingered tales of his extreme charm and gallantry. His mother was one of those strange women, prototype of the rich Castilian lady, who are a mixture of reality and fancy, thought and action, tenderness and virtue; equally able to govern kingdoms or to raise children; equally well versed in household lore and knowledge of public business and universal affairs. This unusual woman reared her son, Juan Manuel, in the atmosphere of a moribund court, where, however, there still shone the brilliant sun of ancient Italy. The youth grew and flourished gallantly, and soon showed himself to be what he was—liberal with his friends, courtly with his enemies, gallant and discreet with the ladies, simple and kindly to his inferiors, loyal to his friends, devoted to literature and the arts, fond of hunting, riding, and even somewhat addicted to the Muses.

Just when he had arrived at an age when he might have displayed his worth to the world, he lost both his mother and his guardians. Alone and inexperienced, his fortune began to slip away from him. The estate was mortgaged, and he began spending in lawsuits and less glorious adventures that which was needed for finer enterprises. At last, his dreams of glory gone, his fortune dissipated, he retired to his old villa in the mountains, and finally married. Each year found his character more sombre and austere. Although his youthful charms were not entirely gone, they were engulfed in an incurable melancholy, for his heart and his pride were doomed to suffer new wounds, deeper and more vital than those he had previously endured. The

insanity of his wife, whom he loved devotedly, plunged him into a sorrow which was only increased by her early death. Little by little his modest fortune decreased; and then came his disappointment in his son, in whom he had placed all the hopes of an aristocratic father. This sword-thrust pierced him to the very roots of his soul. His son, who should have carried on their honoured race; his son, a descendant of a long line of Christian noblemen, to be touring through the world in the guise of a rogue, a renegade, sunk in unsavoury adventures, living with comedians and Bohemians, linking his illustrious name with those of revolutionaries, adventurers, courtesans, and the black chronicle of newspapers! The poor old nobleman was drowned in a sea of bitterness and shame.

But throughout all his suffering the old nobleman never uttered one word of repining or complaint; he only became more silent and sombre than ever, more settled in his isolation; and while he drank from that bitter chalice, his soul was veiled in ardour and mysticism, and with one breath he blessed God and cursed the world. He was destined to suffer yet another blow, directed to the soul of his patriotism: that of a national catastrophe, the shameful route of the nation of the hidalgos—the loss of their empire in the Indies, that rich heritage from the golden centuries, that sad ending of the heroic empire of Spain. This great blow to his race wounded him mortally, and left him with new icicles upon his soul.

All these happenings following each other in such

an overwhelming sequence produced in him a strange hatred—a mental excommunication of his own age and time, in which had occurred his misfortunes as a nobleman, his disappointment as a father, his shame as a patriot, his unhappiness as a man. Filled with an icy bitterness, broken-hearted, he shut himself into the broad regions of the past, the memories of which gave him his only consolation; and he made a silent vow never again to leave the villa wherein his soul had fallen in ruins, and in which he now interred himself as in a sepulchre.

It was a fine old house in one of the finest sections of Santillana, and an air of the past reigned within it—ancient glories, knightly lineage, bygone festivities; and in this old mansion, this silent villa, far from the time in which he actually existed, the old nobleman dwelt as though in a cloister. He never left that sepulchre, never went to town or festival, to country or fair, nor did he ever invite any one to his home, as in the old days when the house had been famous for its dances and festivities. Gone were the days of hunting and love-making and feasting; of stately balls and graceful courtesy. All had passed from that old house, and it also was passing from the rest of the village. New times had come, new customs and new people. The mountain, pierced by the pick of the miner, threaded by the raucous locomotive, had turned the people to modern ways and new ideals. Even the great Péreda, the Homer of that noble line of hidalgos, received little, if any, homage from a people who now no longer understood him. Reflecting upon such changes, the old

knight of Santillana watched the passing of life and the approach of death, ever more sad and silent. Once a week he heard Mass with his daughter, the rest of his days he spent in the silence of his library and his thoughts.

CHAPTER II

CASILDA, his daughter, was his only remaining reason for living, the only window opening from his soul to the world. She was a splendid woman, in the summer of life and beauty, a ray of sunshine in that dismal house. The gnarled and twisted family stock had rooted and flourished anew in this lovely creature. Tall, robust, vigorous, splendidly modelled, Casilda was a worthy rival of the Graces of Rubens. She had a fine form and brilliant colouring, and her large, soft eyes were like a transparency through which shone the loveliness of her soul; her full red lips betokened her health and vitality. She was splendidly healthy and splendidly happy, the very soul of laughter. Laughing, always laughing was Casilda, like a chime of silver bells.

In spite of the fact that her youth had been sacrificed in that poor and sad household, immolated upon the altars of solitary virtues, while she should have been responding to the call of life and love which beat in her pulses and tingled in her nerves like the calls of a lyre, by an admirable caprice of nature Casilda had escaped the atavism of her race. In her was revived and pronounced the gallant figure of her grandmother, but mingled with the courtly virtues and abilities of that splendid old noblewoman, the granddaughter

displayed the added virtues and beauties of the finest type of country-woman.

Always laughing and happy, "without even knowing why," she guided the destinies of that great old house with her firm and competent hand. She was an early riser, up and about at cockcrow, and her bustling activity soon put the whole house into movement. Her first morning greeting came from the old hound who would jump upon her with affectionate leaps and licks, sure of a kind word and the cake of cornbread with which she was wont to regale him; and thereupon the cat mewed, the white doves flew to her feet and shoulders, the little pink pigs squealed in the meadow, and the donkey brayed from his stall. Then, on entering the poultry yard, she received a vehement welcome of squawks and crows and cackles, to which she responded with her tinkling laugh and sprightly smile.

She would stop for a moment at the stables and barns, where the lazy cows would follow her with their dreamy, melancholy eyes as she wandered into the orchard, gathering great baskets of rosy-cheeked apples, which later she stewed with syrup and honey in luscious compotes and preserves.

For her true glory was in the kitchen, where her robust arms and capable hands converted the meagre resources of that poor house into savoury abundance. There she compounded conserves and sweetmeats, pastries and jellies, breadstuffs and cakes, as well as such local staples as ham stewed in wine, loins of pork and chickens smothered in tomatoes; and her sparkling

Asturian cider was famous throughout the countryside. After cooking and serving the meal, she would slip into her seat beside her father in the great, gloomy dining room, casting a ray of cheeriness upon the sombre meal; and after the old nobleman had dined and withdrawn to the solitude of his library, she would seek out her own little room, which was the only gay spot in the house. Facing the south, it shone with sunlight and cleanliness, its only furniture a simple bed, a couple of great linen chests, and a large painting of the Madonna; a plain little room, but everything exquisitely neat, tidy, and clean—the only spot in that great and sombre house which was not filled with a constant gloom and silence; even the very servants passed through the great rooms and long corridors as noiselessly as softly sandalled monks down a cloister; and the few outsiders who occasionally entered its gloomy portals dropped their voices and softened their footsteps, as though some strange spell had hushed them. The head of the house, his nerves stretched thin, was irritated by the slightest sound; he desired silence, and his wishes were like royal commands. Even Casilda muffled her warble when near the rooms of her father, who used to tell her that it was vulgar and plebeian—like her fondness for talking to the servants and country people whom he felt she should keep in their places.

But the laughing Silda was too gentle and kindly to assume the haughty manner of a *Grande Dame*; so she still spoke affectionately to the peasants and the servants; still like a sunbeam struck through the gloom of those heavy shadows, which, however, closed down

again like a fog, as soon as she had passed, heavy with sad memories.

One memory of that old house, however, was neither sad nor heavy, but hovered about the inmates as soft and pure and sweet as the morning mist. The sweet soul of the departed wife and mother, whose wandering wits at last had gathered themselves in the sweet, and peaceful serenity of the life beyond, seemed ever watching and guarding her loved ones. The house was pervaded with her presence; her pale face appeared to look forth from the very mirrors, and her sweet, soft voice seemed whispering in the shadows. The servants always blessed themselves and muttered a prayer as they passed the never-opened door of her room, but Silda always laughed at their fears, "as though the gentle shadow of her darling mother would or could hurt them."

CHAPTER III

THE returned prodigal was about to arrive. Silda was busy arranging for him the room adjoining her own, opening the wardrobes, polishing the furniture, airing the sheets, and delightedly making everything ready. In the village below there was great gossip.

"Have you heard that the young master, Don Pedro, is coming home, after all these years?"

"They say that he is going to do penance for his sins—trust our good Father Elías to take care of that."

"I have heard that he ruined himself in America."

"No such thing, woman! He is coming back to get married."

"And pray, who is there for him to marry?"

"I have heard it said that Don Manuel is bringing him home because he is in bad health and needs the pure air of the country."

"Indeed, I thought that everybody had been told that he was dead."

"Don't repeat this, but I understand that he is not quite right in his head, like his poor mother, God rest her."

And so the gossips gabbled, while Don Juan Manuel sat in his dim and silent room heavy with antique

furniture and ancient tapestries, and awaited the return of his son.

His son coming home after all these years! What would he be like? How would he find him physically, mentally, and morally? Was his repentance sincere, or could he be returning only because urged by poverty and misery? Was he going to be a prop for his declining years, or a bludgeon with which fate would be dealing him yet another blow?

And now a great impatience consumed him. He was nervous, excited, as he had not been in years, and he would not permit Casilda to sit with him in the room, for fear that her presence would open up the floodgates of his emotion. He thought of the gossiping villagers, the shaking heads, the wagging tongues, the lurid tales distorted from all semblance of truth. Not that the truth was not sufficiently lurid! The poor old hidalgo bowed his head in shame; for in spite of Pedro's persistent silence through the years, word of his doings had trickled back to the broken-hearted father; from fair ground and market-place, city club-room and newspaper office, the Latin Quarter and byways of Madrid. Yes, he knew the truth, the worst of it. Worse than the worst, perhaps, but he was ready to forgive, ready to open his house and his heart, if only his son would return to him.

The tall clock in the corner ticked on interminably, and the swing of its pendulum seemed to vibrate within his breast. Suddenly Casilda, watching from the balcony outside, screamed—a scream of joy, and dashed down to the door. The old nobleman rose

and slowly followed her. Just as he reached the foot of the stairs his son appeared in the doorway.

For a moment none of the three could utter a word; the silence was broken only by the weeping of Andrea, the old housekeeper. It was Silda who spoke first. Gazing upon the waxlike face of her brother, with its deep, sad, violet eyes swimming with unshed tears, she threw her arms about him and cried: "Oh, my brother, what ails you? Are you ill?"

"No," gravely responded Pedro. "I am not ill. The fatigue of the journey—my emotion on seeing you all——" he wavered, faltered, clutched at a neighbouring table. His father took him by the hand.

"You need rest. Won't you go and lie down?"

"No, thank you, father. Don't worry. This will pass. There is nothing the matter with me. See, I am all right again. And I am so happy to-day! So happy to see you all, to be with you! Silda, come here, let me look at you. How lovely you are!"

"I will be lovelier when I have brought you a cup of tea," she responded, smiling.

"All right, but first open all the windows, so that I can get a good breath of this fresh country air. Oh, I smell the orchard! This will be like new life to me."

Silda left the room, and father and son seated themselves in silence beside the open window. It had begun to rain, and they watched the fine, warm drops spatter upon the leaves, while the penetrating scent of damp earth and moist jasmine wafted pleasantly upon them. Beneath their window wet cactus and

dripping roses poured forth their rich odours, which mingled with the smell of new-mown hay in the distance. At this moment Silda returned, bearing a well-laden tea-tray and dispensing an atmosphere of warmth and affection which was very comforting to the returned exile. As he sat there in the once-familiar room, surrounded by the old-time furniture and portraits, and partook of the delicacies which his sister pressed upon him, he experienced a delightful sensation of happiness and well-being.

"You must go and rest now," said his father. "Try and sleep a little. We will wake you in time for supper."

The old man himself conducted him to his room, the pleasant room which the loving hands of Silda had so carefully prepared, with the soft white bed which looked so inviting to Pedro, exhausted by his journey and his emotions; and throwing himself upon it, he fell into a profound sleep.

After several hours he awoke, much refreshed, and making a careful toilet, he descended to the corridor where he found his father, who was just coming to summon him. The two men made a great contrast, Pedro in his fashionable light summer attire, silk shirt, and the flowing tie affected by musicians and artists, and beside him the old country nobleman in his coarse dress, broad shoes, and slouch hat which he wore on the back of his head, emphasizing the dandified appearance of the son.

"How do you feel now?" inquired Don Manuel. "Better?"

"Splendidly, father. I have had a good sleep and feel in the pink of condition."

"Would you like to go out?"

"For to-day I would prefer to sit at home. I do not feel like meeting people quite yet, nor talking with any one except you and my own conscience."

The father nodded gravely, and the two went out into the orchard, where they seated themselves beside Silda in a little arbour in front of the house, where they talked pleasant trivialities, as though they had never been separated, and without the slightest allusion to the past. The rain had ceased, and a wonderful orange sunset trembled in the west. The sky was calm, the air clear, and through it sounded the Angelus from the monastery below. A flock of homing swallows darted across the heavens, and the sweet peace of evening fell gently upon their souls.

CHAPTER IV

ALIGHT wind coming up sent them back into the house. Silda had some household duties to attend to, and Don Manuel retired to his room, so Pedro availed himself of this opportunity to explore the house, which he desired to see anew even to its uttermost corners.

The broad, stately stairway led up to a long and narrow corridor which resembled somewhat the gallery of a cloister, surrounded by broad, high doors with heavy hinges, all of which were tightly closed. One of these opened upon the drawing room, a melancholy memorial to bygone days of glory, with its heavy damask hangings, gilded cornices, family portraits, enormous sofas, and historic tapestries, dusty and faded with time. It had a highly ornate ceiling, and a floor of polished chestnut. Between the windows, whose dusty panes admitted a shadowy light, there stood a richly carved console, which might have been sculptured by the great Riesener himself to adorn some gay salon of the Petit Trianon; and a mirror above this reflected shadowy images of the crumbling glories before it. An old-fashioned clavicord, dumb during many decades, recalled the accomplishments of that doughty dame, the mother of Don Juan Manuel, who used to draw from it sweetly intoned gavottes and minuets and

the pretty pastorals of Scarlatti. Pedro drew a breath of relief as he closed the door of the drawing room behind him, and entered one by one the adjoining rooms, all of which presented the same aspect of sadness and age and bygone elegance. Some were completely empty and deserted; others, shut up for many years, were musty through lack of light and ventilation.

The library was the largest room in the house, and a veritable museum of antiquities. Richly bound books, great paintings of famous members of the family, cases of old armour, heavily wrought tapestries, all testified to the taste and the former wealth and glory of the owner. A complete set of fifteenth-century armour, purely gothic style and worthy of a royal palace, was one of the decorations of this splendid room, and the furnishing comprised a great table carved by the celebrated Dijon, two richly decorated escritaires, a number of armchairs and candelabra, as well as some beautiful alabasters and innumerable ornaments and art objects (porcelains, vases, cabinets), completed the furnishings of the apartment. The silence of this great room was deep and solemn. With folded arms and an intense melancholy Pedro gazed upon the sombre portraits, the silent arches, the tapestries, the books and manuscripts, which spoke of a dramatic past, far-off misfortunes, dead hopes, and buried memories.

In the furthest corner of the house, at the end of a dark and narrow passage, Pedro came suddenly upon a closed door. Without trying to open it, he stood there for some minutes, filled with a sudden religious terror and fear. This was his mother's room, and

although the key was in the lock, it had remained unturned during many years, for those in the house would as soon have thought of violating a sepulchre as passing within that silent door. Moved by a sudden strange fascination, Pedro turned the key, which squeaked in its rusty lock with a sharp and sinister sound. As he passed the threshold he felt suddenly as though he were committing an act of impiety, but he summoned his courage and entered. The room was exactly as his mother had left it; not a chair, not a dress had been touched. The plaster of the ceiling had fallen and the place was full of cobwebs. Other than this nothing had been changed since the day when those gentle eyes had last closed upon it.

There was her bed, with its pale silken coverlet still preserving the outline of the figure which had lain there for a short time before being lowered into the earth; there the little table with the bottle of smelling salts and an open prayer book; there in the half-closed wardrobe the dust-covered dresses in the jumbled disorder in which the poor sick mind had latterly kept them. Beside the wardrobe Pedro saw the old bureau which he so well remembered, its drawers still open and filled with that collection of intimate trinkets and garments which time turns into relics. There he gazed upon her tortoise-shell prayer book, amethyst rosary, yellowed letters; a ring, a little bottle of cologne, a lace handkerchief, all sanctified and anointed by the holy memory of his mother. All was sacredly preserved; the superstitious sorrow of husband and son and the austere fidelity of the servants had faithfully respected

that sanctuary, where lingered the image of that noble and lovely woman who had wandered in her mild lunacy through the great rooms of this old manor-house. Never until now had Pedro felt the fullest force of his unhappy life, the fatality and the sorrow of his unfortunate race. As a boy he had not thought upon nor even understood in all their sharp reality the catastrophes of his childhood. But to-day, on entering the home of his fathers, on touching these tokens of his dead mother, he understood all the sorrow of this silent house, full of ruins and memories of a demented mother, a disillusioned father, and a worn-out and moribund race.

Pedro hurriedly left that memory-haunted room, as though fleeing from all that it suggested, and longing for light, for air, for free open spaces, he passed hurriedly into the gallery and ascended to the sun parlour, which overlooked the orchard and the neighbouring countryside. A deep melancholy invaded his heart. He was as sad as though he had descended to the depths of a sepulchre. He had looked upon the past, which spread out before his eyes like a vale of tears. He had evoked the soul of that house, and had beheld rise up from the shadows the image of his mother as he knew her last, the gentle face distorted by madness, the white and nervous hands, and the whole beautiful body trembling like a tortured gazelle; and by her side the austere figure of his father, rigid in mute and pathetic sorrow, and that sweetest memory of his own childhood tinged now with incurable melancholy. And the sadness of all this fell heavily upon his heart.

The freshness of the falling evening comforted him a little as he gazed out upon the beautiful view before him. The sky had turned to a pure violet, upon which lay the moon, like a golden coin. In the calm of the evening all was beautiful and serene. Down near the orchard a couple of countrymen walked along beside their great, groaning carts, and a short, vigorous mountain gentleman pricked the plain upon his dainty-footed mare. An old woman, bowed beneath a load of faggots, stumbled her lengthy way. A fresh evening breeze stirred gently in the treetops, and the freshly cut grass filled the air with fragrance. The last of the swallows were flying to their nests, and the hoarse, monotonous note of the tree toads floated like an echo of the melancholy of night.

CHAPTER V

SILDA'S merry voice, which gurgled beside him, brought Pedro suddenly to himself.

"Where in the world have you been? I have been looking for you all over the house. What are you doing here like a great booby, staring out into the emptiness of night? Don't you know that you might take cold? Come along, we are going to have supper." She gave him a motherly tweak, and linking her arm in his, carried him off toward the dining room. Pedro smiled and snuggled his hand into hers, just as when they were children. It seemed good to feel her there beside him.

It seemed equally good to gaze upon the homelike room which they now entered, with its soft lamplight, the immaculate damask tablecloth and a centrepiece of roses, the rich and heavy silver, and the beautiful antique china. Pedro observed that the table was set for four, and inquired who was to be their guest.

"Why, don't you know," explained Silda, "it is for Father Elías. He comes here almost every night."

Hardly had she spoken these words than the form of the priest appeared in the doorway, and behind him Don Juan Manuel. Pedro went to meet him with open arms, for he remembered the kind priest with great

affection. Don Elías, who also was the descendant of a noble mountain family, was a learned and pious man, gentle and timid of character, but most kindly of heart. Dedicating himself in early youth to the priestly calling he knew nothing of the great world beyond the mountain from which he had never gone forth. He was a fine-looking man, and wore his habit with simple elegance, and in his manners, thoughts, and actions he invariably displayed the nobility of his lineage. He now was an old man, white headed and wrinkled, virgin of soul as of body, a beautiful Christian flower nourished in the odour of sanctity.

"Come to me, my son," he exclaimed, affectionately pressing Pedro to his breast. "How I have longed to see you! Thanks be to God who has finally granted us this great happiness."

Pedro embraced the old priest with effusion, and also expressed his delight at seeing him.

"Well, well," said Don Elías, in his fine and delicate voice, "and so at last you have come back to us! What a delightful surprise! But then I always knew that you would return. What does that proverb say?—'Even the devil becomes glutton with meat.'"

He said this with a rough joviality, absolutely without malice, while he gazed tenderly upon his aging penitent, feeling how sad it was to see him so worn and tired looking, so much older than his years, for the old priest believed, judging by himself, that no man should be old until he was at least eighty.

"But, my boy," he cried, "you are as thin as a rail. But never mind, here we are going to make you as fat

and rosy as an apple. The repose and tranquillity of this quiet life will build you up body and soul.”

They all seated themselves at the table, and when Father Elías had asked the blessing, Andrea brought in a great steaming soup-tureen. The meal was simple, abundant, and savoury, cooked in the old-fashioned Spanish manner, without too rich sauces or too much seasoning. But there was some fine old wine of Aragon vintage, served in tall, thick glasses, like chalices. Pedro was delighted. The calm of the night, the silence of the house, the pleasant, comforting food, the stimulant of the wine, the scent of the flowers, the intimacy of the home—all bathed his soul with well being and tranquillity. The voice of Don Elías brought him out of his ecstasies.

“I commend the good sense which has brought you back to these peaceful realms, where your father tells me you intend to remain for the rest of the life which God may grant you. I fear, however, that this resolution of yours, fine, although a little late, may waver and break with time and isolation, before the quiet of this happy life begins to delight and satisfy you.”

“My resolution,” responded Pedro with firmness, “is definite. I have spent many years in the midst of untold bitterness. I am disillusioned with the world and its vanities. For many years I lived in sin, without remembering my duty, but at last my conscience has awakened, and it is never too late to retrace one’s steps and take the straight road.” Pedro’s voice rang through the room with a limpid passion, and his listeners were filled with emotion on hearing him.

"I am sick at soul," he went on, "and to cure me I need all your love and piety. Love is the great medicine of the soul. I am sure that none of you will deny me this alms which I beg of you. Try and forget what I was, remembering only that which I am striving to be."

Excited by the emotion through which he was passing, and by the heat of the meal, Pedro opened the long-dammed-up current of his tenderness, and he spoke with a nervous eloquence of the feelings which were tormenting him; and he stopped, somewhat ashamed and sorry when he saw the tears in his sister's eyes and the pallor of his father's face.

"Forgive me," he said, trying to smile calmly, "I fear that I have spoiled the quietness of this peaceful supper with my sad memories," and he immediately began to talk lightly and gaily, and asked for news of the town and the various people whom he had once known. Somebody mentioned Juliana, and at this Pedro paled, as though by a wound in his heart. He had shut away that great first love of his youth, but traces of it remained in a shame, a melancholy, a deep repentance which he felt. He had abandoned her who loved him so tenderly, carried away by unworthy attractions, and he dreaded the hour when he would have to see her again. What would he say to her? How would he appear to her? Would she hate him or love him, pity or despise him, grieve for him or be indifferent? And he began to tremble, fearing that at every moment she would appear like a terrible image of reproach. Father Elías began to talk of literature.

"They tell me, Pedro, that you are an author, and

have published books, some of them very beautiful. I would like to read them. Can't you give me some?"

"My books, dear Father Elías, are too—what shall I say—too profane. I must explain to you that, although they are not immoral in themselves, they contain certain passages which would not appeal to your fine tastes. Some of them were published in Paris——"

"Yes, yes, French literature," exclaimed Don Juan Manuel in a tone which he was trying to make joking, "literature of the Latin Quarter. Put away your books, my modern young man, where nobody in Santillana can see them. I say it without wishing to offend you, but you know that they might put you in danger of being condemned for heresy."

"Do they contain so many heresies?" asked the good priest, smiling.

"Nowadays they do not publish any books," said the old hidalgo, "unless they are full of heresy and depravity. In the olden times books went from hand to hand, the savoury fruit of genius, and full of delicate virtue. But to-day even the poets themselves are ashamed of the books which they read."

"Excuse me, father," interrupted Pedro with vehemence, "if I contradict you a little. In the olden times the writers were even more shameless than to-day. Nowadays nobody writes such vileness as Petronius and Marcial, Boccaccio and Aretino, without mentioning many others of the Renaissance and classical antiquity. And coming down to Spain, Lope, Cervantes, Tirso, and Quevedo have been guilty of saying things which nowadays nobody would dare to put into print."

"You are wrong," exclaimed the hidalgo in an angry voice. "The ancients were sometimes rather rough and raw in speech, I admit, but always sane and pure in intention. Their pictures of license are happy and gay, and somewhat crude on occasion, but without the refined cruelty and perversity of nowadays. Their coarsest comedy was always bathed in grace and good humour, and was always written more to make people laugh than to evoke evil thoughts. This cold lewdness of to-day, this sad sensuality, this unsanitary atmosphere of the brothel and the hospital, this delight in vice and pain, this brutal atheism of modern books would never have been tolerated by the ancients."

"There is hardly anybody nowadays," added Don Elías, "who delights at all in the Classics. People have their palates so dulled by highly seasoned sauces and strong liquors that they no longer can taste this sweet serenity, this robust simplicity, this fresh and limpid water of early days."

"In the past," Don Juan Manuel went on, "a refined society gave tone to the arts. Literature was cultivated by clever courtiers who respected the canons of amiable discipline, while nowadays people's tastes, badly educated and worse directed, no longer have that golden fountain, and they are ignorant of its flavour. Maecenas, cultivated and polished, has passed away, and in his place has arisen he whom they call the 'Great Public,' a combination of wild beast, glutton, viciousness. I say frankly that I abhor and wish to have nothing to do with that which they call modern art, with all its perversities and vanities."

"In my humble opinion, dear father," said Pedro, trying to control his vehemence and lowering his voice, "modern art doesn't deserve either your hatred or your disapproval. To-day the artist sees deeper, has vaster horizons, understands better the great struggles of the soul and of emotion, tenderness, and suffering. In the Golden Ages, that which was elemental in custom and the serenity of the soul bore its fruit in those immortal works so filled with good taste; peacefulness and grace, and gentle irony; every thought, every image carried the enchantment of novelty and freshness. But life to-day is more complex, sadder, more curious, more inquisitive. It is pervaded with the scientific spirit. It no longer seeks to climb into heaven and kill gods, to violate all the virgins——"

Silda had left the room hastily at the beginning of this discussion, which left Don Elías blushing and confused, and trying to find some means of cutting short such intense vehemence. While Don Juan Manuel was shaking his hoary locks in angry dissent, Pedro, forgetting everything, in rapidly mounting excitement, talked on with the violence with which he had once been accustomed to harangue a crowd, cheering or stoning, as the case might be, on Madrid street corners, or mounted on a soap-box or cart-tail in country roads or commons.

In spite of the old priest's blushes and his father's insistent gestures of impatience, he continued his militant discourse.

"I also deplore having been born in these days of dramatic struggle, and weep tears of blood over the

loss of true genius. But after all is said and done, I am the child of my own time, and I will not deny it. Oh, divine serenity! How have I sought thee in vain through all the roads of the world! But never mind, I have emblazoned my misfortunes upon my shield and my banner. I have loved, struggled, suffered, but I lay my hopes upon the altars of the future! I neither hate nor despise my own age, in spite of the fact that it has destroyed my own personal happiness. I bless it from the depths of my very soul."

Trembling, his face distorted with anger and emotion, Don Juan Manuel rose from his chair, and said with shaking voice, "It grieves me greatly, Pedro, to hear you give utterance to such nonsensical ideas on the very day in which you return to the home wherein I had hoped to welcome a repentant and obedient son."

Pedro made as though to speak, but his father interrupted him and went on with great severity:

"In your words just now it seems as though I hear an echo of your sorrow and of your apostasies. You cannot understand the harm which you do me when you talk in this way. Why didn't you stop when we tried to make you? I have no wish to offend you," and now his voice dropped and softened a little, "at the very moment in which you have returned to my heart and my home, but I must warn you at the very start to be good enough to govern your tongue and your thoughts, if not in order to please me, at least to show your proper respect for me. I beg that you will not talk to me further of that world which I detest, of that world which sends me back a son who is like a

ghost of his first self. Santillana is my kingdom and my sepulchre, and I desire that hither shall come no unsavoury airs of the outside world. I open my arms to you and offer to you a little of the peace of this quiet cloister, but in exchange you must give me obedience and respect my convictions."

Pedro bowed his head, and answered in a low and trembling voice:

"Forgive me, father, if I have been violent and extreme. I did not mean to cause you annoyance."

"What you have caused me is not annoyance, but sorrow and compassion. I used to dream that some day I would see myself the noble father of a nobler son, sustained in my old age by his love and affection, surrounded by his children, in a home where our ancient faith and the honoured name of my race would flower and flourish; but God has decreed that you, my son, should deny all my hopes, should be a contradiction of all my dreams, denying at every turn all that I love and believe."

The voice of the hidalgo expressed a supreme melancholy, to which Father Elías and Pedro listened without word or comment.

"I despise and I deny," continued that vibrant old voice, "that 'Progress' which you defend and exalt, a Progress against God, which is forged by the hand of Satan himself; that modern spirit which, if Providence did not interfere, would turn the world into a sterile plain, inhabited by a tribe of mole-like dwarfs, who, after throwing down gods and heroes, would order life according to the rules of algebra or chemical formulas."

At this he threw back his head and broke into a cackling nervous laugh, then continued more softly:

"On account of this I myself fled from the great cities where such iniquities are born and flourish, and took refuge in my beloved Santillana, in this house of my fathers, where everything reminds me of a great and glorious past. My friends and my books, my shield and my lineage have soothed with their old-time company that intense disgust of living which I used to feel, that homesickness which used to rend my heart and make me long for death. But above all, I am sustained by pride in my faith, and the hope that I shall die like a Christian and a gentleman, with the cross upon my breast and with the love of God in my soul, trusting in the immortal Love which so sweetly surrounds and comforts me."

As the old nobleman threw back his head, clenched his hands, and drew up his senile body with gallant arrogance, he was the living image of some of those old portraits in the drawing room, insane and sublime Quixotes of a bygone Spain. He remained a few minutes in silent abstraction, and then, bowing his head upon his breast, murmured:

"I'm afraid I have been talking like a crazy man. Let us forget all this, bury our cares, and not discuss this question any more."

The clock struck eleven, and Father Elías, after reciting a short prayer, bade them all good-night. Pedro went at once to his room, but he was so excited by recent events that for a long time he was unable to sleep. As he lay tossing restlessly there filed in turn before

his mental vision the sombre faces of the family portraits, and the abandoned rooms full of images and apparitions of the grave; he saw again the pallid figure of his mother wandering and babbling through the dim rooms, and thus he lay, struggling in mingled terror and unhappiness, until long past midnight.

CHAPTER VI

HE WOKE with the sun, his mind and body refreshed by sleep; the early dawn which tinged the windows of his balcony with a soft and gentle light had aroused him. The prodigal son opened his eyes to those sweet caresses of the light, and quickly jumped out of bed, anxious to look once more upon the glories of a sunrise over the fields of Santillana, which in the days gone by had so often delighted him. He bathed and dressed hurriedly, and at once went out of doors, experiencing a feeling of lightness and freshness of sensation, a happiness and well-being, which he had not known in many years. He, the night owl, who had been accustomed to sleep away the most beautiful part of the morning and had lost the habit of early rising. For many years, tortured by insomnia, he had been accustomed to turn night into day, thereby accentuating the unstable equilibrium of his nerves. But hardly had he arrived at Santillana when sleep miraculously touched his eyes, and normal life began once more to reign over him.

And so now he wandered over the fields of Revolgo, his spirit basking in the ever newly recurring miracle of breaking day. A soft white light bathed the sleeping countryside, which was sheltered in a sort of mystic secrecy. From the dew-drenched earth there arose a

subtle aroma, as exquisite as some delicate perfume. In the clearness of the dawn the countryside took on an appearance of purity, whiteness, and heavenly virginity; and the fresh morning air wafted away from Pedro's soul all the sadness of the night before. And now the light of day, which had lingered lazily behind the hills, softly expanded across the horizon, and touched the rugged mountain crags with a delicacy that softened their sharp and rigid outlines.

The gentle lilt of leaves and trickle of water sounded sweetly in Revolgo. The foliage seemed to be shaking itself awake, and little fledgelings essayed half-learned matutinals with their still weak and delicate tremolos; while like an obbligato from the distance the bells of the monastery summoned the faithful to morning prayer. A group of country people passed on their way to Mass, the men picturesque with their white waistcoats, and the women with gay scarves and kerchiefs; gravely saluting the prodigal, they went on toward the church, their sandals flip-flapping softly upon the roadway. And Pedro continued on his tour of the countryside, coming upon many landmarks of his early days, and recalling old legends which long had hidden dormant in his memory. The great trees seemed like old friends welcoming him; the murmur of a once-familiar fountain reminded him of some happy days of childhood when he had played beside it, and the great house of the Tagles, hidden amidst a grove of giant trees, recalled many pleasant boyhood hours spent within.

And now he came upon the great old palace of the Barredas, a magnificent relic of the eighteenth century,

which stood as a perpetual memorial to the famous Flemish burgomaster who had built it. And thus he took his way among the monuments and relics of the countryside, here mourning over a mutilated heap of ruins, there gazing up at some splendid old palace or tower; and finally coming out upon the street of las Lindas, where, according to legend, once stood the castle of Gil Blas. A turn at the end of this street brought him into the Canton Road, on reaching which he paused for a moment, overcome by profound emotion; for this was *his* street, where he was born, and where stood the palace of his forefathers, the family of Ceballos y los Villas; and round about were the homes of the neighbouring nobility, their friends: the Hurtado de Mendozas, marquises of Santillana; the Bustamantes y Calderones; the Aguilas de los Villas; and that interesting old home of the Hombrones, with its quaint and curious emblazonry. And all these stood as a monument of legendary history, shut in sepulchres and monasteries, archives and geneologies, chronicles and legends, celebrating the virtues of a pious heart, a discreet pen, a clear understanding, and admonishing mankind of to-day to the glorious deeds of yesterday.

The sun had now risen high in the heavens, and a beautiful golden light bathed these ancient stones, tinging them with a pale amber, and above the cloudless sky shone clearly, transparently blue, through which the warm light vibrated harmoniously. Pedro gazed upon these relics with deep emotion; these ancient houses, latticed windows, decrepit archways, dark

portals, and stately staircases; the crumbling shields and escutcheons of a crumbling nobility; here was a Romanesque portal, there a Moorish window, beyond a Gothic archway, the whole fused and welded into a Spanish house, as the Spanish nation had been welded out-of-these fusing races.

Voice of the eternal past; noble and poetic memory—that purest and most exalted of all human sentiments, for is it not always sweeter to remember than to feel! to behold with tear-dimmed eyes, mouldering in some out-of-the-way corner, a faded portal, an outworn dress, a paling manuscript, an implement, a toy, a jewel, now crumbling into decay, which only a little while ago was vibrant to the touch, the use, the vision of a living human being, who to-day has passed beyond our ken!

A few steps and Pedro found himself again before the church, and here he paused to gaze with affectionate reminiscence upon that venerable pile, majestic even in its decadence. Again he looked upon the broken carved lions, which guarded the entrance, and in his youth had been the cause of so much terror to him; the intricate, graven spirals of the bronze doorway, the finely wrought arabesques of the columns which, with the arched Moorish window above them, were mute memorials of long-ago Moslem days. And now Pedro entered the temple, that sanctuary in which reposed the ashes of his fathers, and where he had knelt as a little boy, saying his beads with simple childish faith; and where later his soul had been tormented with its first doubts and skepticisms. The old basilica was a

strange mixture of periods, Latin at basis, Moorish in arch and ornament, Gothic in final finish. It is famed as containing the sepulchre of the martyr, Santa Illana, and of a historic "*Infanta*" of the Asturians, Doña Fronilda, who founded the Collegiate, and in the sacristy there are preserved many rich jewels and chalices, donated by the royal abbess, to which have been added during the centuries other priceless vessels and vestments. But the jewel of this abbey, the jewel of Santillana, is that exquisite monument of the temple and the tomb, that silent retreat of poetry, art, and meditation—The Cloister—the exquisite Roman cloister, the finest of its style and epoch in all of Spain. Now its courtyards were rank with grass and weeds, and for years its beautiful old galleries had been used by the monks as sepulchres, upon the stones of which Pedro read many illustrious names.

Now he turned back into the church, whence the low intonation of the priest's voice and the rumble of the organ told him that Mass had begun. The kindly Don Elías was chanting at the altar, and a group of pious country people were kneeling upon the bare stones of the floor. What a difference, thought Pedro, between this simple devotion and the theatrical church-going of the cities he had left behind him, where women knelt gorgeous with jewels and rich attire, the cloying scent of their perfume transcending that of the incense, and the men scarcely hid the leer of their skepticisms and vices. But in this country church dwelt true piety; here was the faith of the early Christians, and as the good Father elevated the Sacred Host, the rebellious

and skeptical soul of Pedro was suddenly filled with the religious fervour of his childhood; and the silence of the Holy Sacrifice, broken now by the soft murmur of prayer, moved him immeasurably. Long-forgotten orisons rose again to his lips, and as he prayed he felt a sweet happiness, a serene beatitude, as though the spirit of the Holy Ghost had indeed descended upon him.

At the end of Mass the church was deserted by all save Pedro, who, wishing to bask a little longer in that soft, sacred atmosphere, that sweet religious solitude, seated himself on a low bench close to the sepulchre of Santa Illana, where he sat looking down at the prone effigy of the young martyr, so slender and girlish in its sculptured vestments. As he gazed upon this peaceful form, he heard a slight sound, and from the other side of the sepulchre there arose the figure of a woman. For a moment Pedro felt as though the saint herself had come to life and was leaving her tomb. The moving form advanced with gliding step and downcast eye, but just as she passed Pedro, she raised her head and gazed directly at him. With a sudden clutch at his heart he recognized his cousin Juliana, but she went straight on, as though she neither saw nor recognized him, her great sad eyes fixed as though in deep thought.

Pedro stood silent and motionless as the slim figure, garbed in its penitential habit, so like those flowing robes of the sculptured saint, passed over to a corner of the presbytery, where she gently took the arm of a

trembling old man who was kneeling there, and guided him toward the entrance. That must be her father, pondered Pedro, her poor blind father, Don Fernando. He followed them out of doors, watching them enter their carriage and drive off homeward.

CHAPTER VII

IT SEEMED as if in that distant corner of the world the wheel of time had stopped. Hours, days, years passed alike, gray, monotonous, one uniform generation succeeding another, all with the same ideas, the same words, the same gentle manner, the same silence and solitude. A great stupor seemed to have fallen upon the village, whose inhabitants went about quietly and slowly, with a grave and rhythmic calm, as though all their work had been completed, as though all their destinies had been ended, as though nothing remained for them to do excepting to sleep—to sleep eternally.

Once in a while a group would collect at the doors of one of the little houses—wrinkled old women, shrivelled old men, grave-faced children, who, even when they talked, which they did seldom, spoke so quietly that one scarcely heard them. They were like fossils recently excavated, overcome by petrification in some humble moment of their lives. The mystery of Santillana had so enveloped its inhabitants that from childhood all had become accustomed to the inhibitions of silence and reserve. The streets were always deserted. The houses appeared uninhabited. The whole place seemed like a deserted village.

There was one little, white-haired old man who

passed his daylight hours seated at a tiny table, smoking and playing solitaire, laying down each card with a solemnity that resembled a religious rite, as though each card involved a human destiny, an acute matter of conscience, upon which he meditated gravely. Beside him a little old lady spent her entire time over her rosary, slowly passing its great jet beads through her hands like an endless chain, monotonously intoning her Ave Marias one after the other, one after the other, without tiring and without pausing except occasionally to draw a breath.

Here all the good people, nobleman as well as peasant, spent their lives in the same way: they rose and retired, they ate and slept, all at the same hour. They had the same outlook on life; they spoke almost with the same words; they were like clocks, invariably striking at the same hour. Here local dignities, like the local estates, were hereditary. Children were cast in the mould of their parents and their grandparents; there was never a deviation from type. In these parts the old race was preserved in all its purity. The country people existed in happy rusticity, knowing the sadness of neither profane desires nor torturing intellectuality, loving the soil, silent and patient as their own cows, and with the same sad and humble look in their eyes. The race once so valiant seemed to have come to a stopping-place in its evolution; for more than a century the current of life had flowed past this valley, without touching it or its inhabitants; this once-famous and turbulent village, which had been the cradle of strong hands and high hearts, now stood resting on its arms in the midst of

modern life, as though old Father Time had decided suddenly to stop his whirling wheel and here let it rest and rust.

As in the Golden Age, the simple shepherdesses went about with no greater finery than a gay silk kerchief, a string of coral beads, and the short skirt and flapping sandals of the Spanish peasant. And those cruel words *thine* and *mine* seemed here to have been entirely forgotten, for nobody was very rich, as nobody was very poor. Their customs were patriarchal; with the exception of three or four noble families or an occasional lucky peasant who concocted the famous *puchera*, they were content with a jug of milk, a cake of maize bread, a cup of broth, and a morsel of fruit, on which they lived and thrived during many long and healthy years. And here, as is customary in these mountains, while nearly everyone—the men at least—knew how to read, practically nobody did any reading; their knowledge of geography was limited to their own valley, the capital of the province, and the sea. There were no returned Americans; if by chance one of them happened to go overseas and came back with money, he was sure to flee from that cemetery where money was vanity, and usually took up his abode in one of the gayer neighbouring towns.

In Santillana nearly everybody was either an hidalgo or a countryman; a nobleman or a peasant. The scanty *bourgeoisie* comprised the teacher, the apothecary, the innkeeper, the sexton, and one or two others, and the hallmarks of this tiny tribe tracked them through the village, where their half-dozen touched-up

and modernized houses were considered as blots amidst the sombre piles of crumbling antiquity which lined these streets. Here stood the blue-daubed mansion of the apothecary; here the little house where the teacher had his home and school; here another of these vulgar people had dishonoured a venerable façade by cutting more windows in it, insolent windows, always wide open! And here still another parvenu had dared to change the colour of the varnish and the whitewash. But apart from these few vagaries, Santillana presented an unbroken front of sleeping archeology and heraldry, with its multitude of shields, escutcheons, crests, and coats-of-arms, which traced their intricate blazonry across its crumbling manor-houses and palaces.

It seemed as though those noble stones, so splendid even in their ruins, exhaled an aroma of immortality, which impressed all beholders; especially when bathed in the orange and gold of the setting sun, which coloured them with that rich tint so famed in the reddish towers of the Alhambra; at this time they took on the look and expression of a human face, a sweet, spiritual face, weak, melancholy, sad; the windows seemed like large, dark eyes, which peered sorrowfully into the past; and the half-opened doors like the drooping mouths of frail and toothless age; that broken beam, supporting a rickety roof, seemed the crutch of limping age, and the tiny drops of rain, which trickled down the window-panes, like sad and senile tears. The spectacle of these stony faces, the realization of the bitterness of the past, saddens the soul and fills the heart with the tears of things.

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And only a short distance from here flourishes modern life with its mines, industries, railroads; with its modern towns, clean and happy; active, progressive towns, perched upon the ancient Garcilasos; which have been opened and tunnelled, bringing in work, labour, life, industry, activity; here are terminals, factories, theatres, shimmering in the light of arc-lamps and incandescents, which have chased the ancient shadows through these progressive villages, and bathed them in the light of modern understanding. And only four miles from here Santillana dreams apart, ruminating upon departed glories and coming death.

CHAPTER VIII

PEDRO was wandering through the streets of his native village, immersed in thought, when, hearing his name called in a brusque and imperious voice, he halted in front of the palace of the Hombrones, where he stood for a few moments looking in vain for the voice's owner. As no one appeared, he was about to resume his walk, when the heavy portal opened, and in the shadows he perceived the gigantic figure of the master of the house, his uncle and former mentor, Don Rodrigo.

"What are you doing here, lazy bones, loitering before my door," roared Don Rodrigo, roughly embracing him, "without coming in to see me, as you very well know you should? Have you got such a poor memory that you don't even recollect your old uncle and teacher, whose instruction you made such poor use of?" And with a mixture of roughness and kindness, the ruddy, white-bearded old giant pushed him into the house, up the stairs, and into his own room, where he sat him down in a great armchair. The room was large and spacious, and well furnished with heavy antiques, great bookcases which held Don Rodrigo's voluminous library, and an enormous centre table littered with books and papers; but everything showed disorder and lack of care; for Don Rodrigo

lived alone, his only helper an ugly old crone, who knew how to do nothing but grumble and pray.

Pedro soon found that the years had not diminished his uncle's raucous eloquence, for the old man fell at once into lengthy discourse, as though glad of a new listener, and while he harangued, Pedro's wavering attention wandered to the bursting book-shelves, noting which the old man announced sharply:

"You won't find a single modern book on those shelves, and we don't miss them, thank God! The only moderns from whom we lift this ban of excommunication are those few geniuses of this miserable age who nobly maintain the traditions of our race and our language—Escalante, Alarcón, Péreda, Menendez Pelayo, and one other."

"Valera?" timidly inquired Pedro.

"Valera! That miserable disciple of Voltaire!"

"Uncle, permit me——"

"Yes, I know," said Don Rodrigo, interrupting him with his usual vehemence, "I know what you want to say to me. I know what a villain you are. I know with sorrow what a renegade you've become; how far you have departed from all that your name and rank compel you to honour. No, don't try to answer me, I know what I am talking about. The things that I am saying to you may sound strangely in ears which have become accustomed to the modern thought and progressive speech, but the devil take it all, what a stupid young man you are! You deny the past, just as though in the past were not buried the roots of the present and the future. Such silly pride! The son,

when he grows up, despises his father because his father is old, without stopping to remember that to this very old father he owes his life, his name, his soul, his youth, his memory, his thought, everything. Let me tell you, young man, that the roots of our very being are imbedded in what you young know-nothings so disrespectfully call 'old-fashioned notions,' and don't you know that without clearly understanding the past no one can wisely interpret the present nor investigate the future? Since the day when I first exchanged the sword for the pen I have devoted my entire time to studying these matters, and I have come to see how a knowledge of the past illuminates the understanding, tempers the reason, inspires the imagination, and clarifies the judgment. I have submerged my soul in this deep sea; I have read and re-read history, and, as you know, have acquired considerable fame as an antiquarian, having collected many valuable pamphlets and documents for which I have searched musty convents, out-of-the way museums, and sequestered archives. And thanks to this great labour of mine, which some people make fun of, I will at my death leave sufficient material for a great history, which the most learned ones of our time have not been able to compile because of their lack of these humble materials which I have spent my life in collecting. Now, if you only had the right idea of things, what a joy it might be to you to go on with this great and patriotic work! What a rich treasure-house of psychology would be opened to you! What a great name you might make for yourself!"

And having fairly launched himself upon his favourite

theme, Don Rodrigo continued his impassioned discourse interminably, mingling admonition and exhortation, apostrophe and condemnation, history and prophecy, legend and anecdote, and finally wound up with a scathing denunciation of the present and an ardent apostrophe directed to the portrait of Cervantes, which hung above his bookcase. Upon concluding his tirade, Don Rodrigo remained sunk in thought, forgetting his nephew's presence. And the latter took the occasion to make his escape, almost overcome by the torrential eloquence which had engulfed him.

That night, after supper, he took up some of the books which his uncle had lent him and advised him to read, and later went into his father's library to look up some references among the many histories and genealogies with which its shelves abounded. And there at midnight he fell asleep, his head pillowed upon a great volume, as florid and ornate as his own family tree; and there he dreamed a dream, so vivid and startling, that I cannot resist the temptation to pause for a moment in my story and thus describe it.



THE THIRD JOURNEY
THE DANCE OF THE DEAD

CHAPTER I

THE room was illuminated with a soft and mellow glow like moonlight. The door opened, and there entered an enormous old man, who resembled nothing so much as an ancient Saturn, with his bald head and face outlined by a long flaxen beard; he wore a flowing robe, and in one hand carried a scythe, in the other an hour-glass. Two enormous wings sprouted from his shoulders. As Pedro regarded him, the stern old face took on a strange resemblance to the features and expression of his uncle, Don Rodrigo Villa. Without saying a word the strange figure drew near to Pedro, seized him in his arms as though he had been a child, and flapping his enormous wings, sped up with him through the air, cutting the veil of the night with his terrible scythe.

For a long time they flew through the heavens under the pale moonlight, until they reached the silent peak of a shadowy mountain, where the giant alighted and placed the trembling Pedro on the ground in the shadow of his enormous black wings.

A soft light slowly grew in the horizon, bathing the mountain top in a sea of mist, as heavy and as restless as the waves of the ocean; and soon the golden face of the sun smiled through the windows of the west, as she shook out her streaming locks, damp with pearls of dew.

Pedro was fascinated by that magnificent vista of shadow and sunshine, like Dawn at the beginning of the world, when the still-uncounted hours raced through the abysses of time; but the subtle cold of that strange dawn chilled him to the bone, and he pulled about him the trailing robe of the giant, who stood with his arm extended, as though he were Jehovah himself, while the mists, first turning to foam and then to gilded pearls, rapidly rolled back from the sky and disappeared. And now the earth stood forth revealed with the clearness of a day in May; and in the distance sparkled the sea, like a silver sheet, dreamy and deserted.

Fatigued by that wild flight through the skies in the arms of old Father Time, and overcome by many strange emotions, Pedro lay down on the top of the mountain under the sheltering wings of his fierce abductor. Much to his surprise he found that the ground on which he lay was not hard earth and unyielding rock, but some soft material, like a woollen carpet, and that which he thought a mountain was nothing but a mattress of clouds, which floated in the air above the earth.

Many times Pedro had dreamed of floating in this way on a cloud, and now he began to wonder whether this, too, was a dream, or could it be reality? His wandering gaze travelled back and forth, from the old man to the depths below, and while he felt sure that he was dreaming, still everything bore an impression of tangible reality, which convinced and at the same time so terrified him that he was about to emit a scream of fear and horror when the giant seized him by the nape

of the neck, and bent his head so that he was forced to look down below him. Beside that brilliant sea stretched a great country, bare and brown in the centre, leafy at the ends, swarming with animal life and watered by great rivers, which here and there lost themselves in the depths of leafy forests. The whole thing looked like an immense bull's hide stretched out to dry in the sun, suspended from the windows of Europe, and held down at the end by two gigantic columns.

"What country is that?" Pedro hazarded the question, though his voice was almost inaudible from fear and trembling.

"Do you mean to say that you do not recognize it?" said the old man, severely.

Pedro looked again, and then he saw and understood. It was his own country, Spain, thus stretched out before him; at one end the impregnable barrier of the Pyrenees, through which wandered the gilded waters of Father Tagus; here the snowy peaks of Cantabria stretched upward; and there the smooth Betis wandered gently through orange groves; on this side the sun sparkled upon the golden corn-fields of the great Castilian plain, and on the other rioted and blushed the rose gardens of flower-filled Andalusia; at one end smooth, tall palm trees fluttered their plumed crests in the balmy air of the Mediterranean; and at the other rugged, spiky pines rose from the craggy peaks of frigid mountains.

There lay the mother-country of the Spanish race, scene of a thousand tragedies, sleeping between those lovely seas, as though she had just risen out of them,

modelled by the deft fingers of the Creator on the first day of the world. Here is the rude nest of Cantabrians and Asturians, last relic of the ancient strain of the Goths. Here is Vasconia, where the native idiom still echoes the speech of the fierce and warlike Celts; here blooms Andalusia, that favourite daughter of the Orient, garden of the Muses, cradle of poets and sages, where the turreted Alhambra dreams among fountains, and groves of orange trees and pomegranate; here the shores of the Levante, as beautiful as Grecian marble, and there Galicia and Lusitania, those idyllic lands of Arcady; and lastly Aragon and Castile, those mystic, mountain-guarded plains, those hardy anvils of the race whereupon were forged and welded the final great ideal, the glory that was Spain.

And as Pedro regarded this great spectacle it suddenly occurred to him that it was strange that he could see neither city nor temple; not a jet of flame, not a whiff of smoke to denote that life existed in all that great, deserted panorama. Orange groves and cornfields, roses and jasmine grew upon a soil uncultivated by man, and he was just about to hazard a timid question to the terrible old man at his side when suddenly he saw arise from the earth, as though summoned by magic from its very depths, a horde of bronze-coloured men, hairy and ferocious, who looked more like a tribe of gorillas and orang-outangs than human beings; they were dressed in the skins of animals, and in their enormous hands they brandished flint-tipped lances and stone hatchets. Some of them stopped and gathered together in certain spots, at mountain bases and banks

of rivers, at the mouth of caverns and in the shade of rocks and trees; and now they all began to work at various tasks; some of them dug in the earth for shining stones, for the possession of which they struggled and fought furiously, the strongest always overcoming the weak; all that was animal in man seemed to triumph in that society so little removed from the animal. The rule of force reigned upon the earth, and even in his ferocious aspect man bore the mark of the beast; and the females, as strong as the males, had not yet learned humility and submission.

And now before Pedro's astonished eyes centuries passed by like minutes; generations flourished and died like flowers of a day; life raced by like the reels of a cinema. The kiss of love was followed by the cry of a babe, who now sprang from his mother's arms a child, a man, a warrior, a lover, a white-haired ancient tottering into the grave; and so came other generations, to live, to love, to die, each in their turn. Pedro observed that at the end of each cycle the human fruit became more pleasing, losing the mark of the beast, coming ever closer to God's own image. And now he saw crossing the wide earth a magnificent giant, entirely nude, without other weapon than a great war-club, with which he played as though it were a little stick of wood. Behind him sparkled the sun-flecked waves of the Mediterranean, and before him galloped a troupe of centaurs, while all about the world sang harmoniously.

"That must be Hercules," cried Pedro, just as the giant disappeared from sight, while there advanced from the glens of the Pyrenees a great multitude of fierce-

looking men, dressed in short woollen tunics and armed with two-handed swords, iron lances, and daggers. Some of them wore upon their heads black hoods, and others enormous plumed casques. They ran like a horde all over the country, taking possession of mountains and fields, thrusting out the aborigines, and settling down with their women and their flocks, exchanging the shepherd's crook for the sword and dagger, which, however, they never quite lost sight of. For many years this great invasion continued, new hordes arriving from the east upon the tracks of the old, penetrating the most remote corners, where they tilled the earth and erected houses and altars, establishing a rudimentary but organized society.

More minutes passed, minutes which spelled centuries, and the new tribes had settled themselves in the most remote corners of the land, when one day there appeared on the shores of the Mediterranean great ships laden with trinkets and trifles, and also many useful objects of metal and glass; and soon upon the shores of the Levante there sprang up settlements, factories, and bazaars, picturesque focii of a budding civilization, a civilization wherein dominated the trader and the merchant, those astute Phoenicians who brought in their great ships the treasures which they gathered from all parts of the then-known earth, and gold from Tarsis and the Elysian Fields, from Betis and Dauro. These voyagers traded peaceably with the men from the woods and the men from the rivers. They showed them how to exploit the riches of their land. They taught them trade, they taught them the arts, they

taught them the rhythms and meters of poetry; to hunt and to forge alike.

But the instinct of a savage independence surged in the souls of these nomad Celt-Iberians, and like a lion who suddenly leaps upon his unwary captor, they turned and fell with fire and sword upon the beautiful city of Gades. And now the noise of the conflict has wafted across the waters of the Mediterranean to the shores of northern Africa, whence comes a great wave of warriors who enter their boats and stream into Spain, where they cover the face of the earth, which trembles with conflict while the streams run red with blood; while Sagunte, the immortal, rises in flames, which light up the brown and terrible Hannibal, who crosses those plains like an evil genius of death. And hardly has that awful conflagration been extinguished when from the east there pour in new hordes, noble and austere-looking warriors, youthful legions who speak in a beautiful and majestic language, which seems invented to perpetuate itself on bronze and marble. And now the land is covered with magnificent cities, fit habitations for gods; temples and aqueducts, baths and amphitheatres, arches and bridges, statues and columns, wide roads and splendid parks, which in a few centuries cover the spaces once drenched with blood and wretched with ruin; this royal people spread an imperial mantle over the old hide hanging from the windows of Europe and held at the foot by two majestic columns. The sun of the Latin race has conquered night, and with its warmth has nourished the blooming of roses and lilies in the gardens of Hispalis and Emerita.

But beneath the mantle of the praetors lurks the soul of the conqueror and the miser; and the Celt-Iberian, conquered, but never vanquished, returns again to the struggle, and again the torch of the incendiary flames to the sky, consuming the walls of Numancia; and here the Numantian mothers show the world how to die in honour, their example continuing from age to age, until the last Cantabrian shepherds expire upon the cross, sticking out their tongues at their enemies. And now the Octavian peace, the peace of the tomb, arrives; the great empire of the Cæsars spreads her light and her shadow across Iberia, latinizing this old land. Martial sings of wine and of roses; Seneca of the serenity of life; Quintilian of the glories of eloquence.

And now antiquity locks the clasp of her book of gold and of blood within the sepulchre of Julian. A golden glow lights up the world; the star of the three wise men has arisen in the sky. Rome has fallen. Barbarians clamour at her gates, and the click of golden cups is heard no more. Pedro beheld a magnificent yet awesome spectacle one midnight, lit up by the flames of a great conflagration, through which came the noise of galloping, unbridled horses, which bore the wild warriors of the north into the thick of the fight. With them came bloodshed and loot, rape and ruin, and great cities fell like tents before a desert storm; for a hurricane of fire and sword swept the face of the earth like the fulfilment of a prophet of Ezekiel.

Old Father Time looked down upon that cataclysm with a cynical smile, which intensified his resemblance to Don Rodrigo, while Pedro's hair rose on end with

terror as he looked into the crater which opened at his feet.

How terrible was that barbarian wave, which swept down the sides of the Pyrenees, falling like an avalanche upon the fertile plains and overflowing that smiling land like a boundless sea! Thus came the new masters of the world, these ruddy-haired beasts from the banks of the Elb and the Weser. Would that conquered world ever rise again? Would the roses ever blossom and bloom in these deserted wastes? Would temples and song ever rise again toward Heaven? Thus questioned Pedro, and it seemed as though old Father Time, smiling so sardonically above him, made him this answer:

“The whiteness of the sepulchres is ever followed by the whiteness of the cradle. The rose-tree, cut back to its roots, sprouts again with a new vigour in the spring. The past never quite passes away from us; sated with blood, these rude barbarians soon succumb to the softening influences of classic beauty, and to-day fall upon their knees before the very marbles which yesterday they threw down.”

And so in a little while the Graeco-Latin doves flew back to their old nests in the ruined palaces, and with them came also the swallows of Jerusalem. And the doves from the Tiber and the swallows from the Jordan built their nests side by side in the old palaces.

And now the Gothic age opened her illuminated missal, and limned her exquisite monasteries and gilded cryptograms; and there the civil life and the ecclesiastical, so closely allied, flourished in and about the monasteries. A light like that of early dawn

bathed the fair provinces of Spain, and Pedro looked down from his cloud upon the softly illuminated cities of Seville, Toledo, Zaragoza, and the gilded figures of Isadores and Leanders; among which defiled the Gothic kings like tragic, tonsured ghosts, ever fleeing from the poison-cup and the poignard. And here in a blossoming corner he perceived a beautiful garden where fountains trickled and nightingales warbled, and beside a smooth river two lovers caressed fondly.

And old Father Tagus, upon whose shores they embraced, trembled with prophetic premonition of the disaster that was to follow that indiscreet love. Soon comes the vengeful fruit of that love; and who can paint in all its awful colours that inundation from the desert, that wave of white-cloaked Moors, who, after drowning the Gothic king in the bloody waters of the River Jerez, spread out over the whole of Spain like the waters of the Flood? And now blood flowed anew in the land which for ten centuries had been so drenched with bloodshed.

But in a little while this ceased, as it had ceased aforetime, and the wisdom and spirituality of the Orient began to bloom among the roses and the laurels, neutralizing the melancholy of the North with the warmth and the fire of the East.

These Arab knights and lovers brought into Toledo, Cordova, and Grenada from their old home in Damascus its gay intellectuality, its tolerance in thinking, its nobility in feeling, its gallantry in loving, its courtesy in fighting, and its happiness and cleanness of living. They were indeed well named, those Almanzoras and

Abderramanes, poets and princes, soldiers and sages, and the culture which they were to implant forever upon the Spanish soul was to leave upon it its ineffable mark of Oriental sweetness, dreaminess, and gallantry, as well as its Oriental indolence, stoicism, and fatalism.

And now the reconquest begins. Behold Pelayo, with his hardy mountaineers, hurling down rocks and tree trunks upon the towers and minarets, orange groves and gardens of beautiful Andalusia. Behold him drawing forth from the Guadalete and the Deva the cross which had been so long submerged in their foamy waters. The reconquest begins. And again Pedro hears the temple bells playing wildly, and from the minarets the Muezzins call to arms, as once they had called to prayer; he hears the roar of marching multitudes, the songs of troubadours, those martial poets; and above this noise and tumult rings a voice, a supernatural voice, chanting in its rich Castilian accent:

*"I am Ruy Diaz, the Cid,
Campeador of Vivar."*

Below him there arose, on the one hand the mystic spires of churches and cathedrals; on the other, the mystic domes and minarets of mosques—the soaring poetry of the exquisite Giralfa. All about in this realm of "The Prophet," this exquisite kingdom of Andalusia, beauty reigns in the fullness of perfection; here are enchanted woods and murmuring fountains; poets and nightingales tilting in the lists of song; here is soft music and the rhythmic sway of the dance; and here shines the resplendent sun that is Grenada. But

Allah il Allah! God is great. The Christians have arrived. Allah il Allah! It is written. The star of the Moor sinks low. Allah il Allah! God is great. That sinking star has fallen, and the "Last Sigh of the Moor" is stifled in the throat of the exiled Boabdil. God is great. It is written.

In glorious review there passed a great array of Christian kings, accompanied by their splendid court of knights and cavaliers; Gonzalos y Garcilasos, Mendozas y Pulgares, ladies and soldiers, conquered Moors and Christian captives, monks and crucifixes, lances and crossbows, and over all the fluttering banners and standards of Castile—Castile the invincible.

The solemn cavalcade had disappeared into the distance, the last of the Moors had recanted or fled into exile, and the Spanish race, rising to the peak of its power and glory, dispersing its armies and its armadas throughout the world, discovered and dominated, conquered and colonized, their empire extending from the Indies to the fields of Flanders, and the fame of their deeds in song, story, and drama echoed to the very skies. Under the Philips the whole race seemed touched with a sublime madness of conquest, power, wealth, glory, and achievement, material and mental. Their galleons and caravels encircled the seven seas. Their explorers and conquerors reached for the substance of their dream into the very ends of the earth,

*"Like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."*

The sun had reached its zenith, and now the sun declined over the great Castilian plain, which stretched silent and sad, with its dead villages and flapping wind-mills. One day there appeared upon this deserted plain a sombre and austere figure, a knight of sorrowful face, lean and grave, mounted upon a sorry nag equally lean and solemn. Followed by the faithful Sancho, Don Quixote rode forward, and as he raised his head, Pedro, watching from his cloud above, perceived with a great start that the face of the famous Knight of La Mancha was none other than that of his own father Don Juan Manuel de Ceballos; and his squire was not the faithful Sancho Panza, but Leli, the little fat sexton of Santillana.

Pedro was still marvelling at that strange transformation when there appeared a great troupe of people, who came from all directions and gathered about the Quixotic hidalgo astride his faithful Rosinante. And as the setting sun cast a last lingering ray across their faces, Pedro recognized with a start that they were all, all of them, old friends or companions of his: Don Pablo de Rojas, La Chacona, La Camelia, poets and journalists of Madrid, Bohemians of the Latin Quarter, Rosa Luna, the Polish musician, the German student, the French poet, *grisettes* and nihilists, students and revolutionists, all that swarm of adventurers with whom Pedro had once associated. And they all clung about Don Juan Manuel, but he, rising in his stirrups, seized his lance and, poising it in his hand, said to them sternly and arrogantly:

"I know you all, you fools and devils, for you are my

enemies, the enemies of my race and caste. It is you who have beguiled and betrayed my son, and now you are trying to tear me out of my house and my village. I know you, wretched ones, atheists, hell-hounds! And I challenge you all to combat, together or singly, as you choose, but take care, for your hour has come!"

They answered him with a loud and cackling laugh. With his lance on high, he spurred into the midst of the crowd, his valiant squire following; but hardly had he reached the middle of the road when the old mare stumbled and fell, and on top of him fell the hidalgo; and on top of him fell the whole of that cackling riff-raff. Pedro's one thought was to rescue his father from that kicking, struggling mob; he rushed forward, stumbled over the edge of the cloud, and fell, fell, fell—down, down, down.

CHAPTER II

DOWN, down, down, he fell, but without losing his senses, and on reaching the earth he experienced a strange sensation, as though he had landed upon something soft and downy. It was black night, and it took him a few moments to locate himself in the darkness. Picking himself up from the ground, he looked about him, to find that he was standing in a leafy meadow, beside a great tree at the foot of a little hill; a little stream of water rippled and gurgled close by, meandering among the trees which swayed gently in the breeze. The isolation of the spot, the darkness of the night, and that quiet murmur of leaves and water was very pleasing to the spirit of the adventurer who had just fallen from the skies. Without thinking further of what he had seen from on high, and without feeling anything save the weight of his fatigue and a great sense of relief at his freedom from the terrible old giant, he walked toward a little break which appeared between the mountain and the forest, believing that he would there find a road or a path leading to some human habitation. Hardly had he taken a few steps than he perceived a man, dressed in the habit of a priest, kneeling on the grass in an attitude of prayer. Pedro paused at this unexpected encounter, and as he

did so, he overheard a sweet voice pronounce these words in a strange language:

"Blessed be Thou, O God, for my sister the moon, and my other sisters the stars. O God, Thou hast lighted in the sky the light of Thy eternal lamps. Blessed be Thou, O God, for my brother, the wind, for the air, for the clouds, for all the seasons, and for all which sustains Thy children. Blessed be Thou, O God, for my sister the water, so useful, so beautiful, so chaste, and so humble. Blessed be Thou, O God, for our brother the fire, with which Thou lightest the night——"

Just at this moment a noise interrupted the sweet litany. Pedro, to whose ears these words sounded not unfamiliar, advanced and saluted the monk with emotion.

"May God be with you, Friar," he said.

"God be with you, little brother," he replied, melodiously, and as he rose from the ground Pedro regarded him attentively. He was a Franciscan friar, dressed in the coarse dark habit of his order, and with a thin but very beautiful face. The moonlight, which just then illumined him, revealed his thoughtful expression and deep and penetrating eyes, his tall stature and lordly air. The ascetic delicacy of his oval face contrasted sharply with the tiny and feminine daintiness of his hands and feet. Something ineffable, divine, like a perfume of a superior, almost superhuman soul, issued like a supernatural emanation from that humble Franciscan.

Pedro, deeply moved, addressed him in a voice that

was like a prayer: "Father, I surely must have seen you somewhere. Your face is so familiar."

"It is difficult, brother," replied the friar in a voice as sweet as though it had just descended from Heaven, "it is difficult to say, brother. For this is the first time that I have ever been in this spot."

"You have travelled here from a distance, then?"

"No, my brother, God guides my steps. I was just now chanting a prayer. I am on my way to Compostela."

"You are a stranger here?"

"Yes, I come from a little corner of Umbria. My name is Francis of Assisi."

At this Pedro fell upon his knees. The full moon threw a nimbus of gold across the head of the pilgrim. The waters and the breezes ceased their murmur. A mystic silence, a harmonious pause, hung above their heads; the Franciscan raised his eyes to Heaven and chanted:

"O! love of charity, why do you flee from me? My heart is burning with love and grief. It is burning and consuming itself, and can find no peace. I cannot flee because I am tired. As the wax melts in the fire, so we living die and fall away. We beg for rest and find ourselves in an oven. Whither am I going, oh, whither am I going? Love of charity, why do you flee from me?" The pilgrim hardly moved his lips, his vibrating words fell upon the night like dew-drops of pearls into a deep glass. It seemed as though the voice which chanted them was not that of the pilgrim, but the voice of the leaves, of the waters, of the wind, and of the sea.

"Oh, my father!" exclaimed Pedro, when this ineffable voice had stilled. "Why have I not fallen at your feet before this? God be praised that he has permitted me the consolation of your holy apparition! Upon listening to your immortal voice, our brother the wolf leaves his chase and comes and lies down at your feet like a lamb. Our brothers the nightingales quiet in their nests to listen better to your beautiful words; the waters become silent in their courses, the winds sleep in the woods, and nature hushes her varied concert to learn thy chant of love. And I, without knowing thee, oh, blind that I am, have come to disturb the mystic serenity of thy meditations. Pardon me, oh, pardon me, father, and bless me in the name of our Father who is in Heaven! Thou who art the poet of Christian love; who feels better than any other, piety and tenderness for all that lives in this world, from the wing of the butterfly to the heart of man, take me into the sweet fire of charity. I am a human sinner, a sad poet, who seeks in vain for the right road. Hear, oh, hear, sweet master!" Kneeling upon the ground and bathing the robe of the pilgrim with his tears, Pedro pleaded, without making so bold as to raise his eyes to the thin and kindly face which smiled above him, bathed in the light of the moon. The fine and delicate hands of the saint, as caressing as those of an angel, lightly stroked the head of the kneeling penitent, and a sweet and soothing voice thus spoke to him:

"Since you love so much, you must learn to regulate your love, for without order there is no virtue; my wish is that you should love with an orderly affection. O

soul, if you are maddened by ardour, then you must be far from this divine order. Harness your fervour, direct all the flame of your soul into the channel of divine love, and if it be your destiny to be maddened by love, take up thy cross and love God. Do as I, who, loving Christ, have learned to love all things. Make your love active, militant, like the fire. Love without works is not pleasing to Christ. Place your madness upon the sacred madness of the cross."

The vision receded into the shades of night. Again came the murmur of the fountains and the breezes, and the nightingale running his scales in the wood. Pedro, still held by the spell of that celestial apparition, walked along the path without regarding whither, like a wandering shade. For a long time he walked thus, until finally day began to break. In the white light of the dawn the deserted and dew-drenched countryside extended before him without sign of human habitation. A broad and silent river, its waters dark but quiet, flowed a little beyond, a small boat moored to its bank. Hardly aware of what he was doing, Pedro jumped into the boat, seized the oars, and rowed to the opposite shore where, stepping out upon a soft, flower-carpeted field, he heard the echo of a human voice which was softly singing near by. Pedro advanced cautiously, and a few paces beyond he saw in a little clearing in the woods a man of medium stature, well set up and good looking, richly dressed in a uniform which denoted his quality and calling. His face was that of a gentleman of the time of the Renaissance, and his whole bearing showed that he was greatly enjoying the morning fresh-

ness in the forest. Not far off grazed a beautiful steed with splendid trappings. The gentleman, relieved of his armour and equipment, lay stretched upon the grass at the root of an old tree which arched its shade above him, and he accompanied his meditations with a song which had first attracted Pedro's attention. The latter now interrupted him.

"May God be with you, my lord Marquis of Santillana," said Pedro in a loud voice, and catching this gentleman by the legs. "God guard this mirror of the most exalted knighthood, beauty, and minstrelsy which have been seen in Spain for many years, the first in looks, deportment, and greatness, who combines wisdom with courtliness, and covers his armour with the toga."

The carefree knight seemed very much astonished at the unexpected apparition of this strange little man, carelessly dressed, dark and squalid, and drawing back from him he said, sharply, and not very pleasantly:

"Who are you, unhappy creature, that you arrive so unexpectedly, and try to fool me with such nonsense? I have never seen anybody like you on the frontier. Stop your fooling, or——"

"Pardon me, sir," replied Pedro, somewhat annoyed. "I am a poor poet of softer times, but perhaps less happy than yours. I come from Santillana. I was born an hidalgo of famous lineage and clean escutcheon, and I believe not unworthy on that account of the protection of your glorious self. Receive me, sir, especially as from things which I see and conjecture that old Saturn who has been persecuting me, Don Rodrigo Villa, may God confound him, has changed things



about in such a way that the past ages have been resurrected, and those who lived in them now go about speaking to me."

"Now you are talking without any sense. You are raving in a fever."

"Everything happens in my adventures, sir; but tell me, why are you here at this early hour and alone in this solitude?"

"I work in the day and watch in the night, in the service of God and the king; sometimes giving my attention to the affairs of the kingdom, and sometimes to that of the family; at others mixing in the court life and diverting myself with the minstrelsy; sometimes devoting myself to useful employments, and at others to the worship of God. At the present time, owing to changes in fortune, I am entrusted with the government of these valleys, sunk in them, owing to the malice of the Manriques. The life of man upon this earth is like an act of war, and his days here like that of a journeyman, or like a shadow that passes. And, as you probably perceive, I have been induced to leave my life of quiet and sweet reflection, and to take up again the shield and the sword. My men are not very far away, but I have come here alone to rest and refresh myself in this lovely morning, and to soothe my soul with minstrelsy."

Pedro marvelled at the sweetness of the other's speech, and was no less pleased by the appearance of the gentleman, whose countenance displayed a noble serenity, so he listened without essaying to interrupt that gay and knightly eloquence.

"What is the reason for your sadness?" said the other, regarding him with concern. "Are you a soldier? If so, what have you done with your armour?"

"I have already told you, sir, I am a poet."

"Science and song need not lessen the strength of the lance, nor render less facile the sword in the hand of a knight."

"I am a natural pacifist, sir. The poets nowadays are milder and less bold than those of old, and know less about the management of the arms of war than of those others which procure pleasures and money."

"Yours are bad times. Men understand neither war nor minstrelsy. My vassals in these Asturias have so degenerated that I am almost ashamed of them."

"Do not be displeased at what I am going to tell you, Marquis; but if you were to enter Santillana nowadays you would have to be careful, because they would take you for a ghost from long ago and would thrust your highness into a cell in the prison."

"In the name of Santa Illana, I ought to kill you for daring to say such a thing to me! I swear on my faith as a knight that I would thrust this dagger into your heart, only I believe that you are not quite right in your head, and so, sirrah, I will bid you good-day." And saying this, the knight mounted his horse and rode off through the forest as though the devil were after him.

For a moment Pedro stood rooted to the spot, and then, fearing perhaps that the ghost might reappear, he moved off at a good pace down a little bypath through the woods until he reached the king's highway, which

now spread out before him. This he traversed for some time, when he suddenly heard the trot of a horse behind him. Turning his head, he perceived mounted upon a fine horse a youth about twenty years of age, dressed in flaming garments and a tall hat. On passing Pedro he drew up his steed and saluted him courteously.

"God be with you," replied Pedro. "I have lost my way on this road. Will you please tell me where I am?"

"Certainly, we are a few leagues from Santillana. This road will lead you there."

"Thanks very much. I am glad to heard this, because I am going to Santillana."

"Is that so? Well, then, get up on my horse and we will ride along together, if you care to. Your honour seems so fatigued that I would like to be of service to you, even though I do not know you."

"May God reward you! I am a gentleman, but have had several unpleasant experiences. Who are you that you show me such courtesy?"

"Sir Knight, I am Gil Blas of Santillana. My father, after having served for many years in the armies of the king of Spain, retired to the village in which he was born. There he married a peasant woman, and after my birth they went to live in Oviedo, where they settled down. At the age of seventeen I left there, fleeing into the world to seek my fortune. My good star was in the ascendancy, and happy and carefree I travelled through varied lands and with varied fortune; here falling among thieves, there among ladies of quality, serving my hard apprenticeship to life in all imaginable states and conditions, tasting court life and

the adventures of the road, entering the dens of rascals and the houses of grandees, entangled in love affairs and misfortunes, one day the servant of a doctor, another the acolyte of a bishop, another lackey to a courtesan, and on another without a job at all; probing into every nook and corner of this Spanish life, so varied and entertaining, so brimming with the greatest lessons and maddest follies. I have been the friend of actors and poets, courtesans and cavaliers. I've mingled in the world with people of high degree and of low, and now, sated with adventures, carrying a great load of bitter experience and a moneybag with a few ducats, I am returning to the place in which I was born, to rest for a little until the lure of the roads shall again stir me to fare forth into highways and byways."

"Oh, Señor Gil Blas, how delighted I am to find myself in such good company. I am also going to Santilana. Like you, I come sated with adventures and longing to see again my old home, the castle of the Ceballos."

"By my faith, sir, that is indeed an honoured and illustrious castle, and unless I am very much mistaken, you are returning from far-away lands."

"Is it my clothing or my person that thus betrays me?"

"Pardon, Señor de Ceballos, if I was indiscreet, I who have always been considered a model of discretion."

"There has been no indiscretion, Señor Gil Blas. I am a poor, disillusioned poet, and like your honour I have travelled much, and now am eager to rest for a while. Nature favoured me with a less facile humour

than yours; for I must tell you that I am prone to sadness rather than humour. I have within me a devil that embitters for me all the greatest pleasures of life. I was born in less happy times than yours, and the gay, adventurous blood of the Castilian race has been mixed in me with other strange moods and humours, and this is the cause of all my misfortunes. I would give the half of my life to possess that careless and light-hearted spirit of the secretary of Lerma, of the friend of Laura, and Fabricius, of that amiable god-father of the beautiful Serafina!"

"I am astonished, Señor de Ceballos! You seem to know my history very well."

"I have read it with great pleasure, and it was my perusal of it that first stirred my heart with a desire for adventure. You must know, Gil Blas, that your history has travelled through many lands and been translated into many divers tongues in this great world. Your name is more popular and your adventures better known in outside countries than that of my noble ancestor of glorious memory, the Marquis of Santillana."

"I am greatly astonished, dear sir, by this which you tell me. How can it be possible that a poor devil like me can make a greater stir in the world than that magnificent knight of Castile, so famed in letters and in arms, the Marquis of Santillana!"

"Nevertheless, it is true, Señor Gil Blas, and I have taken so much pleasure in the history of your life, I found it so delightful, so entertaining, that I prize it as one of the greatest treasures in my library. Likewise,

it contains such a charming and amiable philosophy of life, such a clear and cutting humour, that it reaches the glorious heights of fame enjoyed by that ever-immortal volume, "Don Quixote de la Mancha."

"You seem to me, Señor de Ceballos, to be a poet not only well read, but well versed in human philosophy. Why do you call yourself unfortunate?"

"It is the destiny of all poets, my good friend Gil Blas, to come to a bad end. I do not know what evil lies in the profession of minstrelsy that it so upsets the senses and always thrusts its devotees into either misery or madness. It seems as though misfortune were the patron saint of poets."

"Then tell me, sir, since you are so dissatisfied with your own, what profession in life appeals to you as the most pleasant and the most lucrative?"

"Oh, Gil Blas, you rascal! Do you ask me such a question, you who are a wandering philosopher, a master of epigram and subtle wisdom? Why, of course, you must be aware that the best profession in this life is not to have any profession. This thing of having a profession is to tie oneself by a chain, to hold one's nose to the grindstone, to voluntarily shut oneself up in the cell of an apiary, like a honey-bee who works all her life without ever enjoying the sweet fruits of her labour. Long live free life, holy poverty, happiness of soul, and chance that always lingers just around the turn of the road! If I have not known how to live this way, the fault was partly mine and partly that of my time. You were lucky to have been born in an epoch which took such things for granted. In those days it

was possible to be a poet and live like a poet, wandering throughout the world and enjoying youthful love and adventure to the full. My lines fell in less pleasant times, when wandering poets are rather out of fashion and more likely to be crowned with a dunce-cap than with a wreath of laurels."

"But pardon me, sir, I am afraid I do not quite understand. Do you mean to say that you are the kind of a poet who is a purist, if you will pardon my saying so?"

"All poets in this century are purists. But tell me this, Gil Blas, why are you returning to your home now, while you are still so young? Have you lost your taste for adventures?"

"In all this talk of adventure and misadventure we still have to consider poverty. Money is a very important thing, and necessity is the mother of all things; and he who without necessity sets out upon the road in search of adventure is a great fool. If I had been born rich, I would have stayed at home, like the soldier who sang that he went to war because he needed the money."

Pedro and his merry companion were continuing their discourse and their badinage when they saw in the distance the houses of Santillana. The sun shone brightly over the village and lit up the fields of Revolgo where the two dismounted and took leave of each other, Gil Blas entering a house on the side of the road; and just as he disappeared, Pedro heard the echo of a clear, loud laugh.

CHAPTER III

NEW and extraordinary surprises awaited Pedro. When he entered Santillana it seemed as though the old and tumble-down village had been restored to a new and beautiful youthfulness. It seemed larger, more populous, gay and bustling, very different from the moribund and desolate aspect which he was accustomed to. Great palaces and tall towers rose in stately magnificence, and a multitude of all sorts of people wandered through the streets and the parks, laughing and talking gayly; everyone seemed prosperous, happy, and good-humoured. At the end of the town he perceived an old convent, with a crowd of beggars and mountebanks swarming about its walls, some carelessly lying on the grass with their faces to the sun, others rattling dice under a sheltering wall. A fierce-looking soldier made eyes at a rollicking country girl who was coming out of a neighbouring house, and a lean Castilian Homer of the roads, enthroned upon a mud-wall, chanted the verses of an old ballad to a gaping group of peasants. Along the road filed a stream of pack mules, followed by a group of horsemen, and later a knight and his lady attended by a great cavalcade of servants and outriders. Under the trees of Revolgo a monk walked up and down, reading his breviary, and an hidalgo, whose dark and shabby

clothing betrayed the fact that he possessed more dignity than ducats, walked slowly and gravely through the crowd, pushing his way unceremoniously through the swarming rabble. The bells of the convent rang out, and the hungry crowd, anticipating their expected ration of soup, surged toward the threshold. From the portals of the villa there came a buzzing sound, a clamouring mixture of laughing and talking, cursing and cackling. The sun, now in the zenith, shone down upon that swarming multitude, mixing in one sparkling brilliancy the gray of the walls and the multi-colour of the crowd, the silks and satins of the knights and the rags of the mountebanks, the uniforms of the soldiers and the tawdry finery of the young girls, the sheen of armour, the sparkle of trinkets, and the trappings of the horses, all making a riot of colour out of that picturesque mob which fought, swore, and laughed in the fields of Revolgo until the chiming of the church bells produced a silence and a peace like that of a psalm.

Pedro stood astonished at that strange mixture of people, before that chapter of a "picaresque novel" in action, and without being able to understand the reason for this marvellous resurrection of that Santilana, the dead, it occurred to him to inquire the meaning of this great pilgrimage which had congregated in his native town; but on his asking this simple question, the mountebank to whom he addressed it threw back his head and emitted a loud and insolent laugh; and at that he found himself surrounded by a great crowd of ruffians and beggars, soldiers and horsemen, who mocked and threatened him with loud voices and rough

gestures. In the midst of that rough and rude deviltry he felt as though a festival of lunatics had been let loose about him; and things might have gone badly with him had not a company of soldiers who just at this moment appeared come to his rescue, and while they were threatening the crowd with their swords and lances, Pedro fled down the street, his body aching with the buffets and blows of those good-for-nothings.

He was hardly in the proper state of mind to take much account of what he saw about him; in fact, he barely noticed the transformation which had taken place in this street, where stood his own home, and which now, instead of presenting an aspect of age and ruin, stood forth proudly in its glory of noble palaces and flaming escutcheons, and winding down to end in a well-kept plaza which was also filled with a stirring crowd. As Pedro passed in his wild flight, they looked at him, open-mouthed and astonished, and all had faces that were strange to him, like painted silhouettes or carven images, such as are seen only in dreams or Romanesque history. Pedro looked in vain for his own house, sticking his nose into every door he came to, like a drunken man who is not quite sure which doorway is his own; it surely must be this one. No, it isn't this one where the light burns at the foot of a statue, nor that one with the Gothic window through which comes a silvery laugh, nor this one here with its stately winding staircase, nor that one there with its vestibule full of soldiers, nor this whose courtyard looks like the entrance to an inn!

But at last he stopped in front of a house which re-

sembled in some respects the home of his father. Here was the shield and escutcheon of the Ceballos; here the balconies like pulpits; the Ionic columns, the heavy cornice. The only difference was that this house looked new, and shone with the whiteness of stone newly quarried. So Pedro gave two resounding blows upon the door, and in a few minutes the heavy portal groaned and swung back on its hinges. A youth with straw-coloured hair opened the door, and behind him appeared the figure of a stately old man dressed in black, with a long white beard, an aquiline nose, the living image in face and bearing of Don Juan Manuel. Pedro was about to enter the house when the old man held him back, saying in a grave and severe voice:

"What are you doing here, stranger? What do you desire in this house?"

"Why, sir," exclaimed Pedro, dismayed, "I am looking for my father, Don Juan Manuel de Ceballos! This is his house and I was born here."

"Are you crazy, or are you making fun of me?" replied the man, angrily. "I am Don Juan Manuel de Ceballos, and I have no son in any way like you. My son, Don Gonzalo, may God rest him, died in Flanders, many years ago, leaving me with this little grandson whom you see here. I have no other heirs, and I do not give asylum to strangers."

Pedro, overcome by the many remarkable things which had happened, trembled like a soul in pain, and he argued with the old man, saying roughly:

"But, my dear sir, this is the house of my father, and I intend to enter here if I have to use force."

At the sound of this altercation the servants came running up, and promptly threw him out of the house, at which he began to run through the streets as though he were crazy. When he came to his senses, he found himself in the middle of the square surrounded by a hostile crowd who were jeering at him and pelting him with stones and making a terrible racket which echoed throughout the town; people were looking out of the windows and shutting their doors, women were taking refuge in the doorways, and finally a troupe of soldiers arrived and the officer in charge inquired what was the reason for this terrible commotion. Pedro took advantage of the lull in the disturbance to escape from the mob, and ran swiftly to the church, which at this hour was deserted, and wherein he hid himself, trembling with fear and shaking with fatigue. And now, without knowing how he had come hither, he found himself in the cloister.

The courtyard was silent, deserted, covered with grass and leafy verdure through which murmured a light wind. He looked at the old tombstones rotting with damp, where he could read the old names, Santilana, Velarde, Calderon, Villa, Polanco, Barreda, contrasting that spectacle of ruin and death with a rich grapevine which raised its robust trunk over a wall and extended its heavily laden branches above the arcade.

Overcome by sadness, Pedro seated himself in that quiet spot, when he noticed the cloister tremble and vibrate as though shaken by an earthquake. Full of a strange terror, he felt that he must rise and flee from under those trembling arches, when a very curious thing

happened. As though moved by some extraordinary life, the columns with their wealth of carven figures began to move, to twist, to multiply until they were completely covered with fantastic beings, strange animals, and curious flowers. And then these wandering images, carved by unknown artisans, detached themselves from their beds of stone, and, vines and palm branches, dragons and prostitutes, angels and reprobates, monsters and warriors, biblical scenes and episodes of the chase, turbaned Orientals and adventurous knights, all that imagery of Romanesque art, carved from the fertile fancies of legend and miracle, the relics of paganism, and the thought of the world, the flesh and the devil; all that fantastic world which had lived for so many ages, carven in stone upon the capitals of the columns, suddenly became animated with life, growing to full stature and flying, running, leaping, like a rebellious and satanic horde gleefully disobeying the laws of nature.

As though something else were needed to augment the horror of the spectacle, the tombs opened and the old sepulchres disgorged their dead, as by some miraculous resurrection. Old abbots with their faces sunken by fasting and prayer; rude warriors in rusty armour, and scarred with the wounds of battle; helmeted knights, pallid monks, saints and sinners, wise men and fools, all left their tombs, suddenly restored to the image of what they had been in life. They left their tombs silently, as though stupefied by this reincarnation, and the tremendous secret of "more beyond" was written upon all their brows.

Trembling with horror, Pedro fled from that weird procession, dashing to the door in his endeavour to escape from further visions. The church was deserted, sleeping in a deep peace, and its images and paintings showed forth clearly in the light of the sun which penetrated through the dome above. In the centre of the sanctuary lay Santa Illana upon her stone sarcophagus. Pedro, overcome by emotion and filled with a sudden desire to pray, drew near to the tomb of the saint who had given her name to the church and the village. There she lay, carved in stone, slender, graceful, dreaming, resembling one of those figures which we often see in antique tapestries and stained glass, an ideal type of mystic beauty, which began in Giotto and ended in Raphael. Pedro knelt down in front of the old tomb, and began to pray with all the fervour of his distant childhood. Just then he raised his eyes, and on doing so screamed with terror. Santa Illana was sitting up on her bed of stone, looking at him with a strange expression! He was unable to rise from his shaking knees. The saint lived, and she gracefully slipped from her marble couch and stood before him. Her lovely face had lost its stony hue and glowed with the rosy tints of flesh, and her eyes burned with strange brilliancy. Pedro trembled as he saw her step down upon the floor, and recognized the face, the form, the features, as those of Juliana, his cousin.

"Juliana!" he cried. "Is it you? Even in this re-incarnated saint have you come to reproach me, or in this resurrection have you, too, resurrected your old love?"



"What are you saying?" said the saint in a sweet, soft voice, as melodious as that of an angel. "Why have you come to awaken me from my stony sleep, and tear me from the peace of the sepulchre?"

"Oh, Juliana, forgive me, forgive me! I love you still."

"Go, sinner!" she said, her voice losing some of its softness. "For what have you come? Why do you wish to fire again the cold ashes of that which is dead and done with? Go! Santa Illana is dead. I am dead."

"No, Juliana!" cried Pedro with savage eloquence. "There is something which never dies, and that is love. Above the tombs of the past, above that which has died and been converted into dust, our love still flourishes, like roses in a cemetery."

Pedro advanced toward her, but she drew back saying, "Go from me, sinner! Go from me, temptation!"

"But why, then, have you come to life in your sepulchre?" exclaimed Pedro with a sob.

"In order to kill sin."

"Oh, soul of my soul!" cried Pedro, falling upon his knees. "I am he whom you once loved."

"No," said the celestial voice, sadly, "you are my enemy. You are Sin. You are the dragon," and the saint, loosening the cord of her habit, advanced toward him with an angry gesture.

And now there happened a horrible thing. Pedro found that he himself had been converted into a dragon! His human figure took on the form of the monster. His arms turned into vicious wings. His form and face

became hideous. His trunk trailed like that of a serpent. He tried to walk, and felt beneath him on the ground the dragging of hard scales. He tried to talk, and from his mouth there issued flame and fire. Terrified by his own image, he turned to flee, and at that the saint, who held in her left hand the cord of her habit, threw it like a noose about his neck. Pedro felt something tighten about his throat, suffered a deathly anguish. A black shadow covered the saint, the church, the village, the entire world. The monster fell dead at the feet of St. Juliana, and Pedro—awoke.

THE FOURTH JOURNEY
THE FLAME OF A LASTING LOVE

CHAPTER I

HOLY MOTHER, and what wonderful things young Master Pedro says whenever he opens his mouth! I wouldn't be surprised if they inspired the very angels themselves! And for a person with such wonderful talent to come and hide himself away in this God-forsaken hole! I suppose God knows how to manage the destiny of all us poor creatures, but it certainly makes me feel bad to see stuck in this corner of Santillana such a fine young man, who ought to be sparkling among cities and palaces."

Thus spoke the old housekeeper, Andrea, who was sitting in the sun-room, her wrinkled old face grimacing over her knitting. Donia, her niece, a gay little brunette, sat beside her, mending the clean linen; and a little beyond Rosuca, a niece of the Father Elías, was making pillow lace; and Silda, who was sorting the linen, wandered back and forth between the sun-parlour and her own room, singing like a mavis.

"Ever since he came to Santillana," went on Andrea, "that poor young man has lived like a saint; every morning he goes to Mass, and the rest of the day he spends in the cloister with his books and his writing. He never goes to a fair or a party. His only diversion is a walk with Don Elías, which certainly isn't great

gayety! I don't believe the monks themselves live a more saintly life!"

"What a wonderful man," laughed Rosuca, smiling mischievously. "I often see him pass our door in the evening, walking like a snail, a book in his hand, and not noticing anybody. And at other times he goes and sits over in Revolgo, telling stories and jokes to a horde of little urchins. (They say he is very fond of children.) At other times he goes off to stare at the ruins behind the church, and at times it looks as though he were crying. I wonder why he likes to go about alone, or pass days at a time shut up in his own room like a hermit. I really believe that he isn't right in the head." And at this the young girl tapped her forehead, smiling significantly and making a roguish little grimace.

"In spite of all this," exclaimed Donia, slackening her needle, "people aren't so terribly fond of him. They say," she added, lowering her voice mysteriously, "that he is a heretic, and has been sent here from Rome to do penance. And they also say——"

"Shut up, you little fool!" exclaimed Andrea, slapping the little chatterbox. "Who ever told you such stories? Don't I know the young master, I who dandled him on my knee half an hour after he was born? He is a good Christian, if ever there was one, and there isn't anybody in the world nobler or finer than he. He is even kind and good to the animals. One day he bought from Lelis' little nephew all the birds which he had in his cage, and set them free, because, he said, it was a wicked thing to cage up those little animals whom God created to be free.

"Another time, when Sol, Don Rodrigo's dog, hurt his foot out in the mountain, he bound it up with some wonderful ointment which he made out of herbs, and in a little while the animal was entirely cured; and ever since then, whenever old Sol catches sight of the young master, he makes a tremendous fuss over him. For in spite of anything folks may say, animals are always grateful. And another time Don Pedro fought with the Redhead, because he was ill-treating his oxen, which only goes to prove that he feels for everyone and everything, even to the point of being angry when they mow down the flowers in the field, or let the trees wither and dry up. I don't care whether he goes to Mass because he's been told to or because his own faith sends him, but I do know that he prays. One night, when I was wandering about out of doors, I saw him standing up on the mountain, with his eyes looking up to Heaven, like the pictures of the Holy Saints. I don't know what prayers he was saying, but I do know that he prayed, and I dare anybody to contradict me."

"I feel very sorry for him," said Donia, sadly. "He is good. But there are people who even say that he is one with the devil."

"Oh, stop talking such nonsense," laughed Rosuca. "The devil has horns and a long tail, and such an awful-looking face that everybody is afraid of him; and besides all this, he smells terribly of sulphur."

"Well, if that is so," went on Donia, "I know that Don Pedro doesn't smell of sulphur, but of rose-water, for he uses perfume like a woman."

"Well, doesn't that bear out what I just said? The

right kind of a man never uses perfume. Isn't that so, Andrea?"

"And who ever told you such tales?"

"He has such big eyes, and such a sad face, and a beard like the Nazarene," exclaimed Rosuca.

"Yes, he looks just like Jesus."

"Oh, Donia, don't say such things! That's blasphemy."

"God forgive me, Rosuca, but it's the truth."

"Well, as for me," went on Rosuca, "the thing that I like best about him is his way of talking, so slow and so sweet that it does the heart good to hear him. The things he says are so sweet, so beautiful, so simply explained. They say that he has read loads of books, and has written a lot more right out of his own head. He knows everything; he talks about the countries of the world, and people who live on the other side of the sea; about the history of other times, and about the stars that you see in the sky, and ever so much more. The other night he was telling such marvellous things to Casilda and me, explaining about the sun and the moon; how those wonderful lights that shine in the night are worlds like ours, where there are fields and rivers and flowers, and even people. Another time he made us cry, telling us beautiful stories about the life of Jesus. And then people say that he is a heretic! Anybody that says that doesn't know what true Christianity really is."

Rosuca stopped suddenly, at the appearance of Silda, who entered the sun-parlour, and behind her Pedro himself. The brother and sister seated themselves, Pedro placing his chair next to that of Rosuca.

The two young girls continued their work with bowed heads, without making so bold as to look at Pedro, who watched the two charming young creatures, the one so dark, the other so fair, who already began to show symptoms of feminine coquetry. Suddenly Rosuca raised her head, and observing Pedro's eyes fixed upon her, she blushed like a cherry.

"What a charming couple you are!" he exclaimed, playfully. "All that is lacking to make you look like two little princesses is a robe of velvet and ermine."

And Pedro proceeded with his innocent gallantries and half-quizzical compliments while the two pretty creatures, the rosebud and the pink, blushed into deeper hue, and the roguish gray eyes and the mischievous black ones looked up at him with glances that were at once timid and caressing.

"Do you know," he went on, "that the best thing in Santillana is its women? You are the only things that carry on the fine old traditions of beauty and grandeur. It is wonderful to see how among the ruins of this dead village there flourishes so much feminine beauty. I really haven't seen an ugly girl in Santillana. Even the old women have a roguish grace well worthy of a Gongora."

The girls all smiled broadly as he went on with his compliments, and even old Andrea preened herself visibly. Rosuca and Donia finally burst out laughing.

"That's right, girls," went on Pedro, "I am glad to see that you are not only lovely but happy. May the smile never vanish from your lips."

The girls blushed more deeply than ever, and here Silda broke in with:

"Yes, you're always talking about laughter and gayety, but you never laugh, and you're never gay."

Pedro disregarded this and continued his joking observations.

"Tell me," he said, as though not hearing his sister's interruption, "have you sweethearts?"

It was Andrea who answered him in a tone of annoyance.

"And where are the poor things going to find sweethearts in this dead hole? Things would be different for them if they lived over in Puente, or even in Torrelavega or Santander, where there is a little something doing. But in this melancholy solitude——"

She shrugged her shoulders and shook her head sadly over these two blooming young prisoners—flowers of chastity in a bee-abandoned garden.

Condemned to live apart from the world and its gayeties; destined to flourish and fade, unwanted, unwooded, unwed; Juliana of the raven hair and mystic eyes; Casilda of the golden locks and silver laugh; Donia, the brown-haired gypsy; and Rosuca, the ruddy coquette. Youth beat in their hearts and surged in their pulses; Life and Love lured and beckoned, but always hovered just beyond the gates of the cloister which immured these sweet young virgins.

The little group had fallen into a sad and contemplative silence which was broken by the voice of Juliana calling from the orchard below. Silda ran down to meet her cousin, but Pedro did not move from the side of Rosuca. He found himself greatly attracted by this little blonde, with her peaches-and-cream complexion,

her round, happy face brimming with innocent mischief, her roguish, green-gray eyes, and the full red lips which smiled over tiny, pearl-like teeth. She was like a rich, round summer apple, ripening in early maturity. In many ways she resembled Casilda in her abounding mountain wholesomeness, but with certain timidities and reserves, as well as coqueties of early youth. Pedro also liked to talk with her, for her soul was like a Christian fountain, and her replies to his jokes and his gallantries were childlike in their innocence; he played with her as with a little tame kitten, telling her stories, reciting poetry, teasing her, laughing with her, delighting in the contrast between her trembling and fragile soul unfolding to life like a half-blown lily, and his, world-worn, withered, blasé.

"Are you fond of books, Rosuca?" he inquired, as she dropped her sewing for a moment to steal a furtive glance at herself in the mirror.

"Books?" she said. "Well, to tell you the truth, I have never had very many. A few novels, a little folklore, and the lives of the Saints. I would like to know about many more things, but you see how it is here, shut up in a place like this, one never can learn anything."

"Would you like to travel?"

"Wouldn't I, though! Sometimes I feel as if I'd like to put on wings and fly away into new lands and countries; to go on a long, long journey which would never end; to sail the sea in a big, big boat; to travel on a train as far as Madrid perhaps, and maybe Paris! You've been to Paris, haven't you?"

"Yes, child, I once lived there."

"Oh, do tell me all about Paris!"

"Well, how shall I begin?—Oh, Paris isn't of any great account, there are big streets, many palaces, many people, much gayety, and—much sadness also——"

"Sadness! In Paris? How can that be?"

"It can very well be. Don't you know that wherever there are people there is both sadness and happiness? And the more people there are, the more happiness and the more sadness?"

"I always thought that there couldn't be anything as sad as Santillana."

"That depends upon the way you look at things. Sorrow and sadness do not lie in things, but in ourselves. There are people who couldn't be sad, no matter how hard they tried, and there are others whom nothing can make happy."

"And why, then, are you always so sad?" said the girl, seriously. "I thought that everyone in the great world beyond was sure to be happy. I thought they spent their lives like birds, forever singing."

"And do you think, Rosuca, that birds cannot cry?"

"What have they got to cry about? For them life is nothing but laughing and happiness."

"Don't you believe it. The birds often cry. But the thing is that they cry so sweetly that people think they are singing, for the sorrow of birds expresses itself in music. In this world every creature which knows how to feel also knows how to weep. Things also weep. Have you never heard of the tears of things?"

Rosuca shook her head, laughing.

"No," she said, "I've never heard of any such tears."

"Do not laugh, for they exist. The heavens weep tears of rain; the trees and flowers tears of dew; in all sad places there are tears in the air, bitter tears——"

"Good gracious, Don Pedro, in another minute you'll be making me cry!" and she made a half-serious, half-mischievous little grimace.

"I would never want to do that, Rosuca, for your laughter is too precious to me. I love your laughter, which is like a ray of light from God. Laugh, laugh, Rosuca!"

"And you, why don't you laugh also?"

"Because my laugh is as forced and as false as the tears of a crocodile. We men of the world do not know how to laugh, and when we attempt to, the devil laughs with us."

"Holy Mother of God! What terrible things must have happened to you to make you talk like this!"

At this juncture Donia broke in:

"Why don't you two discuss more agreeable topics?" winking one eye at Rosuca. Then turning to Pedro: "Tell us another of your pretty stories, please do."

"Don't let it be a sad one," added Rosuca.

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said Donia, "so long as it is a story, it doesn't make any difference whether it is sad or not. Sad stories are often very amusing. One time, when I went to the theatre at Torrelavega, I saw a play in which a whole lot of people died, and the funny creatures wept and died, talking poetry. It made me sad to see them die, but I enjoyed it all greatly. I'm afraid I must be very hard-hearted, because ever since then I have loved to see people die in the theatre."

"Well," said Pedro, "since you insist, I will tell you the story of the three princesses. Once upon a time there was a king who had three lovely daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia——"

"Oh, not that story!" exclaimed Rosuca, covering her eyes with her hands as if to shut out a fantasy. "The poor King Lear! It makes me feel so sad to hear about him and the lovely and unhappy Cordelia! And the poor old man who had his eyes put out! It is all so horrible!"

"Well, how about the story of the ring?"

"What was that one?" inquired Donia.

"Oh, don't you remember?" said Rosuca, vehemently. "It was about a sculptor who made a statue so beautiful that he called her Venus, and fell in love with her. And in proof of his love he put a ring on the statue; but finally one day he married a real woman, and that night he felt a hand as hard and cold as ice take hold of his wrist, and when he had lit the lamp, he saw beside his bed the statue of Venus, pointing to her hand and the ring, which he had put on her finger. 'Behold the ring which you once gave me,' said the statue, talking just like a real person. The poor sculptor wanted to run away, but the statue, which looked at him with its white eyes, held on to his arm. And the poor man began to feel a terrible cold, which travelled up his arm and finally froze right to his heart. And then he fell dead of fear and of cold, embraced in the arms of the statue! And—that was all. I read that story a little while ago in a book that belongs to my Uncle Elías."

"Did you ever hear the story of the blackberries?"

inquired Pedro, who was secretly enjoying the young creatures' innocent babble.

"No," answered the two girls, "we never heard of it. What is it about?"

"The story which explains why the blackberries are black. Don't you like blackberries?"

"Indeed, and I do!" exclaimed Rosuca, "I always make a perfect glutton of myself over them."

"But were the blackberries really white once upon a time?" inquired Donia.

"As white as the snow!"

"That story is not a story," broke in Andrea, "but true history of these mountains of the Asturias, which I have known very well for many years."

"Tell us about it, Andrea, tell us about it," they all cried.

Andrea, nothing loth, lifted her head, laid down her knitting-needle, and crossing her withered arms, recounted as follows:

"It was in the days of Don Pelayo and of the Lady Mari-Castaña (now this was really so, and happened not very far from here). Her hair was as yellow as gold. He was dark, and both were wonderfully handsome and good. His name was Toñin, and hers was Sinda. Toñin owned a little bit of land, but he was fonder of singing and dancing at fairs than of tilling the soil, and for that reason the parents of Sinda were not much inclined toward him and did not want them to marry. Being neighbours, the two young things could never lose sight of each other, and so they suffered and wept until they were nothing but skin and bones.

Finally, one day they decided to flee together, and agreed to meet at nightfall in the mountain beside a little brook where the young man used to fish for trout. Sinda reached there first, and on arriving at the little river, she beheld a bear as big as an elephant, with two great eyes that shone out of the night like live coals. Poor Sinda was frightened almost to death when she saw the bear, and she began throwing things at him—her basket, her handkerchief; and finally she began to run over the mountain, on which the bear grunted, and vented his fury on the things which she had thrown at him, chewing on them and spattering them all with the blood of the animals which he had eaten and with which his mouth was stained. When the bear saw Toñin, who just then arrived, he took himself off; and when the poor young man saw the things which were on the ground, the little handkerchief all stained with blood, the broken, trampled basket, he believed that the terrible bear had devoured his love. The night was dark. The air was cold, and he heard the bear groaning and grumbling not very far away. And at this Toñin, the desperate young lunatic, took out his knife and plunged it into his own heart. And hardly had he drawn his last breath when poor little Sinda came running up, her yellow hair falling about her like a cloud of gold. And when she saw her lover lying there dead before her, she clasped his lifeless form in her arms and wept bitterly. What was she going to do without her darling Toñin? Indeed, she could not, would not live without him! So she pulled the knife from the breast of her lover and plunged it into her own heart. And

the blood of the two lovers fell upon the blackberries, whose bushes were all about; and the whiteness of the blackberries was changed into black, and thus ends the tale of the blackberries."

They all applauded Andrea heartily, the old woman smiling with pleasure at their approval. And Pedro, pondering upon this ancient legend of his own mountain, reflected how closely it resembled the classic myth of Pyramus and Thisbe.

It was growing late, and no one wished to tell any more stories; Rosuca and Donia put up their work, as it was time for them to go to their respective homes, and Pedro descended to the orchard where he joined Silda and Juliana.

On their way home Donia nodded roguishly at Rosuca.

"I wonder if you know that Don Pedro was paying more attention to you than he was to Andrea's story," she said, archly. "He was looking at you all the time."

"And what if he did?" said Rosuca, annoyed. "A cat may look at a queen, or a king at a cat, may he not? Is there anything special in that?"

"Oh, nothing very special—I dare say. But why does he always look at you so *dreamily*? Why does he always sit so close beside you? Why does he always talk to you so—so——"

"But, Pedro, child! Why, he is old enough to be my father!"

"He looks much older than he really is. And after all, age isn't such a great matter."

"You are talking nonsense, Donia!"

"Nonsense, eh? Well, time will decide that."

"Good gracious, and what a chattering little gossip you are!" and saying this, Rosuca dropped her friend's arm and ran toward her home across the square.

CHAPTER II

JULIANA was reading in the orchard. Seated on an old stone bench beside a group of rose-bushes, she made a lovely picture, which Pedro, watching unseen from behind the thick trunk of an apple tree, found very lovely. Garbed in simple Franciscan vestments, her tall, slender form resembled one of those images of the early Christians, long preserved in the sombre sanctity of some ancient cloister, a body consumed by the fires of abstinence and mortification. For Juliana was extremely thin, and in addition to this she displayed a gravity of countenance, a seriousness of demeanour, a noble elegance that suggested an abbess of royal blood. Her face wore an expression of mingled gentleness and anxiety, and was always extremely pale, this being accentuated by her heavy black hair and deep, dark eyes. She had a small nose with broad, sensual nostrils, and her lips were fine, pallid, and by turns dry and burning, the upper one faintly outlined by a tiny trace of down. Without doubt Juliana had lost much of the freshness and charm of her former beauty, but in spite of this the austere countenance showed a latent fascination.

Pedro watched her for some time, his heart filled with a sweet and tender compassion, and at length called her name softly.

"Liana," he said, leaving his hiding-place and drawing near to his cousin.

Juliana trembled, rose, and drew back a few paces.

"Why do you run away from me?" asked Pedro, gently.

Pale as death, Juliana hesitated, paused.

"I was so surprised," she stammered, "you appeared so suddenly! You frightened me!"

"Forgive me, dear cousin. I was passing and saw you, and thought I would come over and speak to you."

Juliana remained silently standing in front of her cousin, avoiding his gaze by looking at the roses.

"Does my being here bother you?" he went on, gently.

"Why would it bother me?" Liana said this with an air of such complete indifference that Pedro felt mortified, annoyed.

"Won't you sit down," he said, "and let me talk to you for a few moments?"

Without replying, Juliana reseated herself, and Pedro sat down beside her. There were a few moments of silence, Juliana flicking the pages of her half-opened book with her long and sensuous fingers. They could hear the twittering of birds, the trickle of a fountain, the tinkle of a cowbell in the distance.

Pedro leaned over and touched the cover of the book.

"What are you reading?" he enquired, for want of a better topic.

"I was reading the 'Life of St. Francis.'"

There was another long pause. Pedro was becoming confused and abashed.

"Do you still think ill of me, Juliana?" he said at

last, his voice very low and trembling. "Will you never forgive me?"

Juliana trembled and made a grave and dignified gesture of disdain.

"Have I left no little track upon your heart?" persisted Pedro, in a voice that was little more than a sigh. "Does no little tenderness for me still linger in some corner of your soul?"

"Nowadays, I live only for my father," responded Juliana, gravely. "If it were not for him, I should long have been over there," and with her marble-like hand she pointed to the roof of the distant convent.

"Juliana! Many years and much sorrow have passed over us, since the days of our early love, from which Fate and my own misdoings drove me out upon the roads of the world. I have been very unhappy, believe me! And now, after so many years and so many changes, we meet again. Won't you have a little pity on me? Don't draw away from me. In those by-gone days——"

"Do not speak to me of those days!" she said, impatiently. "I have already forgotten them. I am no longer the flighty child whom you once knew——"

"But there still exists a bond between us, even if it be only the sad fraternity of sorrow. We are like two pilgrims who meet at the end of a long, long road. Shall we refuse to recall the common hardships of our journey? Can we not hope that out of the ashes of the past there may rise the phoenix of an affectionate friendship? Tell me, Juliana, do you still think ill of me? Will you never forgive me?"

"God is the only one who needs to forgive you."

"Juliana, I am not as bad as you believe. You think I am merely perverse, but from the beginning so many things have been against me."

Juliana remained silent, and looked off into the distance as though she were not listening to him.

"Liana, listen to me, Liana, I implore you. All my life I have been looking for a little corner in the sun, a little pool of living waters, in which to slake the thirst of my gasping soul. I have suffered so much. How much is known only to God, who so often has seen me weep."

"Do you believe in God?" said Juliana in a solemn voice.

Pedro appeared uncertain, whereupon his cousin covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, you unhappy man!" she cried. "You fill me with pity and horror."

"Juliana, I do not know whether I believe or not. My ideas are not the same as yours. How can I explain it to you? You look upon God as a human figure of misery and sorrow, nailed to a cross. I, on the other hand, see God in all of nature, living in everything, in the water, in the air, in the fire, in the flowers, in the stars, and in human souls. I am not an atheist, Juliana. I couldn't be one, even if I tried. Of what good is the will if we confine religion to matters of flesh and blood? When we are born, Juliana, we are marked with the seal of immortality, but after birth the dead govern us!"

"Heavenly Father, what heresies you are talking!"

exclaimed Juliana in a tone of annoyance. "Those books, those villainous books which you read have twisted your reason; that's what they have done, you unfortunate man!"

"Yes, Juliana, many things have conspired against me. Fate bears heavily upon our family—that same Fate which ruined my father, which destroyed the reason of my mother, which has brought unhappiness to my home and to yours. Oh, Santillana, cemetery of the living and the dead! How heavily have your miseries borne down upon our hearts!" Pedro talked with a new exaltation, and Juliana listened to him fearfully.

"For God's sake, don't talk like that! It frightens me to listen to you, Pedro." But without heeding the supplicating voice, he went on:

"Everything has conspired against me. Born in the midst of these ruins, the late fruit of an old tree, I came into the world already borne down by a heavy inheritance. My wandering life, the books I have read, and the thoughts I have pondered have completed the damage. I arrive at the end of the journey with a longing to begin all over again, mourning, but not yet ready to die. Don't you understand me, Juliana? Don't you understand me? What can I say? Forgive me, cousin," he paused for a moment, and then went on more humbly:

"Forgive me, Juliana, I implore you. There are times I don't know what I am talking about. I am a blind machine of words. This has been my life—to talk much, putting my whole heart into speech; to talk and do nothing, that is all. Words, words, words! I

look back upon my useless life, and feel sorry for it all. I haven't even known how to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow. And they say that I have talent—a great deal of talent! I am tired of hearing this stupid praise. What is talent, Juliana? Of what good is a talent that is good for nothing? How many parvenus have walked over me, insulting me with their riches? A poor poet, they say, a dreamer, a visionary. Do you believe, cousin, that I have been nothing but a vulgar madcap? Do you think that I have spent my life in the world beyond merely amusing myself among the foolish and the frivolous? If so, you do me a grave injustice, for I was employed far more worthily. My only sin was in being romantic in an unromantic age.”

He paused, with bowed head and heaving breast. Juliana did not speak, and the silence of the evening bore down upon them. Then Pedro raised his head, looked at his cousin, and began to laugh. She regarded him with surprise and said:

“You make me suffer, and now you laugh.”

“Poor little Juliana,” he said, his voice caressing her, “I promise never to talk about these things again. We will chatter about happy topics. We will laugh, sing, play the violin, anything to please you.”

“Music makes me sad.”

“I will play gay music, dances, languid minuets, sprightly gavottes and schottisches, music of the age of gallantry; and if you wish something more sober, I will borrow from Poland her strange rhythms, her wailing gypsy dances, her Slavish laments. Or if your soul craves things of Spain, I will evoke the Alhambra and

Albaicin, songs of the gypsies and sighs of the Malagueñas."

"How strangely you talk, Pedro! You pass from sadness to burlesque with the whim of a child. I wonder if you will ever cease to be a child."

"There are men who are always children, Juliana."

"But you are a perverse child, an impious one."

"You will convert me."

"Now do not joke. So great is the power of faith that many times poor, ignorant women, aided only by the grace of God, have converted the worst heretics, leading them to wisdom and sanity."

"Juliana, you have a soul so delicate that it rises above the most saintly. Do you know that every time I look on you I feel as though I was beholding St. Illana herself. When you were a child, you used to look a little like the saint, and now you are her living image. In you I behold something super-human, something divine, a reincarnation of that saintly damsel who gave her name to this village. Her name, which is also yours. St. Juliana is not dead; I have seen her with these my mortal eyes. This sweet and beautiful martyr lives still in Santillana, and at this moment is talking with me, for by some great mystery the image of the saintly legend has been revived again in you."

"Such things are heresies," replied Juliana with sweet reproach. "You must not say them."

"God be with you, Santa Illana! Tower of ivory, mirror of grace, consolation of the pilgrim, star of the night!"

"I cannot consent to listen to such impious talk! If

it is for this that you have returned, you had better continue on your road to perdition, and leave me alone with my peace."

"Forgive me, Juliana, I did not mean to make you suffer."

"Go, Pedro, go. Rosuca and Donia are waiting for you. Go and tell them stories; amuse them, deceive them. The poor little creatures are so beautiful and so happy. Leave the sad to their sadness, and go you to look for that which you call the gayety of life. In this house there is no gayety."

The voice of Juliana vibrated with an inexplicable emotion, with a strange accent of irony. Pedro was about to answer her when from the distance there sounded the sharp voice of Don Fernando.

"My father is calling me. Good-bye, Pedro, good-bye."

She rose and walked slowly toward the house, her slender figure disappearing among the trees, but her bitter, unhappy voice still vibrated in the soul of Pedro. Did she still love him? It seemed as though for a moment jealousy had trembled in her speech. Pedro pondered upon that sweet dream in which he had beheld the Saint arise from her tomb and come toward him, beautiful and eternal name of the dragon! Might this not be a symbol, for in spite of the horrors of that terrible dream there lingered a sweet memory, as though the saint had enveloped him in her tunic, as though she had pressed him to her heart in a mixture of human love and religious ecstasy. Did his cousin love him still, or was he deluding himself with senti-

mental recollections of the past? As for his own feeling toward her, he couldn't quite understand it himself. Juliana was for him the incarnation of the past, the sweetness of his childhood, the first impulse of his youth, all that there was in his heart of child and poet. At present she inspired in him a sorrowful compassion. He saw her at the end of her youth and beauty, spiritualized, it is true, but changed into a shadow of her old self. And yet he felt a strange attraction to her, a feverish desire to drown himself in the depths of those great, dark eyes.

And at all these strange fountains Pedro nourished his sentiment with a soul never sated; ever-ready for each new emotion, his will lacking restraint, he abandoned himself to sentimentality and blind instinct, without ever seeing or thinking clearly. He was always drifting with the current. In him were broken the strings of concerted action, of ordered thought, of regulated will. He was a victim of his own indolence, and for him all life was concentrated upon imagination and speech. Overcome by his habit of solitary thought, and the living forces of youth destroyed, he lived a false and introspective existence.

He remained sitting beside the rose-arbour lost in thought, when he heard the sound of passing footsteps, and raising his head, beheld Father Elías coming toward him.

"What are you doing here so lonely and meditative?" said the good priest. "Are you going to see Don Fernando?"

"Yes, but I came upon Juliana, and we sat here for a

while talking, and now I am enjoying the fresh air of the orchard here. And you, where are you going?"

"Oh, just taking a little walk down the road. Would you care to accompany me? That is, if you are not in a hurry to see Don Fernando."

"I'll be very glad to go with you, Don Elías."

"And I will be equally glad to have you, if you can bear with the company of an old man like myself."

"Your company, Father, is a great treat to me. Among all your other virtues, you include the great gift of peace. Your speech is so calm, your soul so serene, that by your side one feels a great peace and serenity."

The old man smiled pleasantly, and they walked on down the road, every passerby saluting the priest with profound respect. He stopped and talked with each in turn, dispensing both counsel and money, according to the necessities and the estate of those whom he encountered. The evening was soft and peaceful. They turned into the road leading to the convent of Regina-Coeli, and they climbed the winding way in silence, as though unwilling to disturb by speech the solemnity of the night. Even the leaves of the trees were still; the country seemed to be inviting one to mystic contemplation. A profound peace pervaded the atmosphere. The avenue was deserted, and the roads stretched before them, white and solitary, as though fleeing from the sleeping village below. Upon the broad green of the meadow grazed a few cows, and here and there a shepherd wandered among his flocks. Both man and beast manifested the same gentleness and quietness, and had

the same soft look in their eyes. In spite of their ignorance and their rusticity, those mountaineers greatly attracted Pedro. Sated by the artifices of the life he had left behind him, he found, by contrast, a certain pleasure in these primitive creatures, as rugged and stoical as the cattle of their pastures. Their rude strength and candid, ingenuous manners belonged to a simpler race and time, and even in their speech there echoed the cadences and idioms of the days of the troubadours.

"Don't you find that you have improved greatly in Santillana?" said Don Elías, noting the young man's evident pleasure in watching the scene about him. "Haven't you really benefited in health by the serenity of this peaceful life?"

"Yes," responded Pedro, but somewhat indifferently, "I'm feeling pretty fit."

"Well," replied the priest, "to be frank with you, I notice that you are always sad, just as sad as the day when you arrived. What's the matter with you, boy? In this peaceful existence, this natural and tranquil life, you ought to have been cured of all the wounds which the world has dealt you."

"There is something in me myself, Don Elías, which prevents my ever being at peace. It is a spiritual grief, a gnawing canker which is destroying me little by little. In this retired retreat I feel more keenly than ever this eternal gnawing. This solitude terrifies me like a deep abyss——"

"God have mercy upon us, and how strange you are, you men of to-day! In my time youth lingered for

many years, and never experienced these fatigues and regrets. Solitude, silence, why there is nothing more beautiful nor more consoling. Look at these simple peasants! They are a lesson for you. Behold how strong they are, how serene, how confident in the guiding hand of a great and good God! They know how to enjoy the grave silence of the fields, accommodating their speech and their manners to the restful rhythm of things. They live quietly, unhurried, care-free; they love this soil devotedly, and they share their healthy and peaceful life with animals and plants, the owner of the land which they cultivate, and with the hope of the Heaven which they look up to. Here there are poor, but no beggars. Everyone has his little piece of land, his cows or his sheep; there is no sad wealth, but happy poverty. Below in the world whence you have come rich and poor contend with rancour and hatred; here we are all equal, like a great family which shares its pleasures and its sorrows. No one is without some small possession, but the servant doesn't envy the master, neither does the master despise his servants. And thus we live here, Pedro, a beautiful, peaceful, noble life. And not only do we know how to live well, but how to die well. In what a grave, austere, and solemn manner do these peasants arrive at the end of their journey and bid farewell to it! I, who have seen so many of them die, do not believe that, when my hour arrives, I will meet it as spiritually, as nobly——”

“I do not think, Don Elías,” interrupted Pedro at this point, “that this which you praise so highly is a sign of such greatness of soul. These people have the

resignation of the brute, of the beast, which is without intelligence. Truly great spirits are consumed by anxiety, compassion, rebellion——”

“You are mistaken, my son. The wise man never rebels. Serenity is the supreme fruit of science, and the simple of heart resemble the wise. Extremes meet.”

“How happy are they who have tasted this fruit, Don Elías! Serenity! Serenity!” Pedro uttered these words in a voice of the deepest sadness. Then silently the two continued on their way.

CHAPTER III

WHERE is peace? Where is virtue? In all my wanderings through the world I have never discovered either of them. I have seen in those great cities the pride of the modern soul, men bent under the pain of endeavour, like galley slaves chained to their oars, without knowing whither their efforts were sending the ships which they rowed. I have beheld the poor man miserable in his hovel, the rich man miserable in his palace: the one groaning under physical cares and handicaps, the other under moral and mental. And still other people weep without knowing why. I myself believed that I was going to find happiness when I returned to this world of the past, only to encounter the same old misery."

"Happiness," exclaimed Don Elías, "can be found only in divine simplicity, in the simplicity of the soul! Blessed are the poor in heart!"

"And how is one going to preserve such simplicity in the midst of the tempests of life, when everything tumbles about one's feet? Perhaps there once was a time when such an ideal state was possible. But to-day the ideal of repose cannot exist in those restless societies, among iconoclasts who tear down both gods and worlds. You, Father, were born here, and here you were reared. All you know of life is the peace of this quiet village,

the peace of the seminary, the peace of the church. You have the calmness of soul of one of those blessed abbots who lived for a century in the shadow of this cloister, without ever leaving its shelter. The books which they read spoke only of beauty and dreams, either terrible or simple, of the peace of the soul, of the Kingdom of God, and the thought of death. What do you know, happy, serene souls, of the insatiable curiosity of the intellect, of the infinite passions of the heart, of disorders which, like vultures, gnaw at the vitals of the men of to-day?"

"The soul filled with Grace finds peace and serenity everywhere. What ails you is that you have lost your faith and are filled with the confusion of a sinful soul abandoned by Grace."

"Yes, Father. I have lost my faith. But that simple faith is hardly possible in these times of struggle, of criticism, of scientific research."

"Faith is possible everywhere."

"But once having lost it——"

"You can recover it again with the help of God and the proper will. Men sunk deeper in heresy than you have returned to the Grace of God."

"I see, Father, that we do not understand each other; that we will never understand each other."

"That, my son, is pride and hardness of heart."

"We do not speak the same language, Father. You are a theologian——"

But at these words the old priest began to frown, and noticing this, Pedro broke off. Don Elías was not an ordinary priest, but a true physician of souls, as well as

a learned and pious man. He deeply loved Pedro, whom he had baptized, confirmed, and to whose first halting confession he had listened; in addition to this, he loved him for the sake of Don Juan Manuel, and the memories and traditions of their two families, which for centuries had been closely allied. Pedro also remembered all this, and when he spoke again, his voice was low and tender.

"Forgive me, Don Elías, if I have appeared to speak sharply and disrespectfully. There are times when my tongue runs away with me. Say to me anything you wish, scold me if you want to. I wish to place my soul in your hands. You are receiving the confession of a man who believes only in Fate and sorrow, and the great pain of living."

"Ah, my son, if I could only bring you back into the ways of truth! If I could only dispel these doubts and uncertainties!"

Pedro shook his head sadly. "From my earliest boyhood I have been sad and perplexed; I have always looked upon the great mysteries of life with sorrow and skepticism. When I beheld my mother die, beheld the anguish of my poor father, and my home crushed by sorrow, my boyish faith and my boyish dreams suddenly crumbled about me. I began to doubt, to question, often with tears in my eyes. Why did God allow such things? Why do they say that sorrow is for our good? Why insist that we are born only to suffer? And I began to rebel against such a cruel destiny. From my earliest infancy my ears were filled with talk of sorrow and death, of sin and punish-



ment. Do you remember my first little confession, and how I told you that I did not believe in Hell? You were so horror-stricken. Well, now I feel as though I were again kneeling before you in the shadow of the confessional. No, Father, I will not deceive you. I do not believe in those horrible punishments. If God is so good, why would He condemn a poor soul to eternal torture? You remember how I wept when I first confessed this to you, and you, pitying me perhaps, reasoned with me in words which I hardly understood, and then blessed me. That was the beginning of my first skepticism and rebellion. From that time I have gone further; books and life have disillusioned me still more." Pedro paused, his last words vibrating in the silence of the evening, while Father Elías, who walked slowly, as though bowed beneath the weight of that sad confession, replied gently:

"The roots of your unhappiness go deeper than I had supposed. But never mind, I believe that I can console you. I believe that I can convert you. You are neither wicked nor frivolous, and believe me, Heaven is filled with such souls as yours, who have travailed and struggled, and finally, by the Grace of Almighty God, have reached eternal peace."

"You are right, dear Father. I am not frivolous. I would gladly throw myself upon the mercy of a superhuman and omnipotent love; bask in the sunshine of a perfect faith; rest my tired heart in the shelter of complete understanding. I have known so much of vacillation and uncertainty; of combat, fever, tumult, destruction; if only I could come to God, know Him,

understand Him, love Him, receive Him, possess Him, incorporate Him in the depths of my body and soul. I recall how in my early days of piety the Sacrament of Communion was for me a veritable feast of the spirit, an intense, voluptuous joy—the memory is still for me a joy.”

“Your sentiments, Pedro,” interrupted Don Elías, “are strangely mixed. Yours is a too ardent soul; even into things of religion you infuse an unhealthy sensuality, which, if I am not greatly mistaken, is the cause of all your doubts and restlessness. At times you talk like a mystic, and at others like a reprobate.”

Pedro smiled ironically. “Yes,” he said, “I am, if you will pardon the paradox, a mystic without faith. I feel in my soul an unlimited tenderness, a dissolute piety, as cold as ice, and as burning as a corrosive acid. My will-power seems to dissolve into vague pities and raptures, aimless tears, inexplicable ecstasies. If I had kept my faith, I might have become a fervent Franciscan, a barefooted monk of Assisi; but with the loss of my faith, Grace fled from me and left me sad, as life also fled from me and left me desolate. And this is the sordid tragedy, the intimate crisis of many souls to-day; and I believe this great moral conflict is extended to whole peoples, and explains their decadence. How sad we must appear to you, dear Father! Senile youths, born under a cloud, with strength neither to maintain our heritage from the past nor to create new visions of the future! And thus we float on the sea of life, like abandoned ships, without rudders, oars, or compass. We are vassals without a king, citizens with-

out a country, mystics without a God. If only we had the courage and valour to break down all the walls, to shatter all the gods, destroy all the laws, and to begin to live and create anew! But no, in this soulless age, faith is without courage, reason without valour; the sinners are cowards, and the rebellious weak and wavering."

The frown on the old priest's forehead grew ever deeper as he listened to the burning phrases of the prodigal. Never had the good pastor of Santillana listened to such a mixture of light and shadow; pride and humility; sorrow and rebellion. But he made no attempt to check that flood of impious words and thoughts; accustomed to the quiet confessions of penitents submissive to dogma, of souls unstirred by metaphysical bias and spiritual conflict, the old priest vainly groped in the depths of his kindly soul for words or counsels fitted for such an unusual occasion.

"We are victims of an atavism," went on Pedro, "which has paralyzed our minds and our flesh. We cannot lift up either our bodies or our souls. The chain which ties us to the dead holds us back from ourselves; the call of the race, which is a call from the tomb, guides us and governs us. What, for example, did I do when I rejected the faith of my fathers? I became filled with spiritual terrors, I was obsessed by mysticism, the last lingering shreds of my early teaching and training. Looking up at the sky during many nights of insomnia I was terrified by the spectacle of that great Infinity, which, filled with a multitude of stars and worlds, stretched so silently above me. That firmament was a reminder of eternity, and fright-

ened me with its perpetual warning of 'There is more beyond.' Reason vainly endeavoured to persuade me otherwise, but the heavens' dark and mysterious voids, where Force held its sway, where trembled worlds whence issued light and heat, were indifferent. But the facts of science could not comfort a soul once nourished upon the fictions of fable. In that black immensity my soul was seeking for a Will that directed and guided; a Heart heedful of the echo of our earthly supplications; a Being to whom we might call for help and pity out of the universal night. But the heavens stretched black and silent above me, black and silent as a tomb."

"Oh, blind youth!" exclaimed the priest. "How are you going to see the light if you shut your eyes? How are you going to hear the word of God if you close your ears? How are you going to open the door if you bury the key? If you would attain truth, you must be willing and unresisting. These very excitements of your soul are indeed a proof of faith, of your need of faith, a need of faith which is inherent in all of us—in all of us human creatures; we cannot get away from it. In this world man knows either belief or doubt, with the exception of a few miserable creatures who have neither heart nor understanding. All of us have been confronted by problems of life and destiny which surge upon us from within; our very conscience asks questions which disturb the spirit with anxiety. But, my son, these great questions can never be answered by cold reason; they can only be overcome by faith. From that horrible abyss which you have

described there is a bridge, a ladder of gold, a way of light. God has not sent us that tormenting thought of 'More beyond,' without sending us also an arc of salvation. How could Infinite Mercy torture us with thoughts of an insoluble problem? Oh, my son, look beyond those eternal silences, those black abysses, and behold the rock of faith, the eternal refuge which you have so long sought and desired! He who possesses Faith looks upon the Infinite without fear, without terror, there beholding his refuge, his home, his country. There he finds rest and happiness, and the sweet shelter of a loving mother's arms. This, my son, is true Faith, the true Church, true Religion."

"Such faith, dear Father Elías, such a church and such religion I could accept, gladly, happily accept. But, alas, religion as I have known it imposes doctrine, dogma, absolute authority, iron rules of conduct, stringent regulations of all our thoughts and issues, mental, moral, material. Why not separate from religion these doctrines and principles, and incorporate them into a scientific system of education, a theory of metaphysics? But then, indeed, what would be left of religion as we know it to-day?"

"Such talk, Pedro, is materialistic and atheistic. I cannot listen to these rebellious doctrines."

"No, Don Elías, for such a separation of dogma and faith as I have been describing to you humanity accomplished many centuries ago. Even you yourself, as well as I, unconsciously practise it daily. God himself decreed otherwise when He said: 'Render unto Cæsar that which belongs to Cæsar, and unto God that

which belongs to God.' But who, dear Father, established the limits between the possessions of Cæsar and God?"

"Our Holy Mother Church."

"And for him who does not bow to the authority of the Church?"

"For him, Pedro, there is only doubt and confusion. Are you not seeing this in your very self?"

"Every thinking man, no matter how religious he may be, must at times feel in his heart some of these same doubts and confusions."

"That is so; but he who is guided by faith smothers the voice of pride, and realizes the weakness of his own understanding. He knows how limited is human intelligence; how to God all things are clear, even when hidden to man. He knows that he must bow to the great laws of life and religion. Ah, my son, believe me, man cannot live without formal religion; while there exists on this world below injustice, infidelity, crime, and tyranny; while sickness and death track our steps; while there are weak women and helpless children; tender hearts and fiery loves; while the great mystery of the infinite broods over us in sacred silence; while there remains a trace of doubt and sadness in this vale of tears, human hearts and human souls will need the comfort and guidance of religion. And even on that day when all the world shall be at peace—if that happy day ever come, when love and harmony and health and happiness will reign among us—even then, dear Pedro, religion will be enthroned among men, chanting her glad hosannas like a choir of love and happiness.

"I am not an enemy of intelligence; rather do I admire those daughters of the Holy Ghost, the virtues of wisdom and understanding, but over and above these I admire the more humble virtues of a clean heart and a simple soul; goodness, sympathy, charity, tenderness, everything depends upon a good heart, as our divine St. Teresa was wont to declare. Better than reason, better than arguments, better than intellect are good works and the love of God. Love, and not reason, is the work of the true Christian. Love! That is the root of all faith. You reason overmuch, my son, and this frigid analysis has left your soul chilled and your heart hardened to true tenderness."

"But am I to believe that you would have me do away with all thought? Must I deceive my own intelligence?"

"The important thing is not to deceive your own heart. Tell me, have I not often seen you kneeling in the church and passing long hours in the cloister?"

"Those abodes of silence and repose soothe me greatly."

"You see, that is a good beginning, and shows that your soul is well disposed. Do not smile. Make it a point to go to church every day. It doesn't matter whether at first you deceive yourself a little bit. Believe all you can and let the rest go. Faith, like everything else, grows by exercise, and the exercise of this divine art is stimulated by practice, just as practice assists and stimulates the human arts. You tell me that your soul is filled with desires, yearnings for love and tenderness. Well, go to the altar. Don't bother

your head so much with the things that seem absurd and unreasonable in the substance of religion; but ponder upon faith and hope and charity; meditate piously; say some simple little prayer; learn to feel a little more and to think a little less. In all of this you will find consolation. And when your spirit has been soothed, perform some little act of abstinence, of piety, a trifling charity, and above all, my son, love! Love much!"

Night fell softly and majestically, the sun declining among clouds of exquisite richness of colour, behind which stretched the sky, a deep blue shield. The noises of the country sounded softly in the distance, stilling at length into a profound silence, which was suddenly broken by the music of a song which gradually resolved itself into the long, slow notes of the plain chant. From behind Bispieres appeared a group of country people, walking slowly in single file, and singing as slowly as they walked. And now the bells of the neighbouring church rang out as though tolling an accompaniment. The picture was one of such rustic solemnity, such deep and mysterious peace, that Pedro felt deeply moved, and tears came into his eyes.

"Dear Father," he said, "this twilight fills me with sadness. I would like to pray, but I cannot. The white dove has flown and refuses to return to her old nest in my heart."

The country people had hushed their singing on hearing the bells of the Angelus, and now stood with their heads bowed in prayer.

"Hail, Mary!" the vibrant voice of the old priest

rang out over the fields full of grass, "The Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" And now the voice of the peasants took up the prayer responsively:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners."

The whole of nature seemed suspended in the solemn mystery of the moment—seemed bowed with priest and peasants in simple prayer. The trees, motionless in the soft air of the twilight, were like the great votive boughs of some religious festival. From the meadows a thousand wild flowers flung the incense of their perfume upon the evening air. A white road wound its mystic pathway through the meadows. The "soul of things" ascended to Heaven like a prayer. In the distance the tolling bells sounded as clearly and sweetly as the rich notes of a harp. The silent earth opened its arms to the night with a voluptuous melancholy, a secret wonder.

The tolling prayer hushed and died away; while the country people again took up their chant, which floated limpidly on the evening air, for a long time following Don Elías and Pedro as they took their way back to Santillana, Pedro sunk in deep meditation, while the priest softly recited to himself the verses of that exquisite Ave Maria of Escalante.

CHAPTER IV

IT WAS autumn. The fleeting gayeties of summer had fled from the village. The countryside was bathed in an air of mystery, of tenderness and melancholy. The roads with their mud walls and fences, the deserted streets, the abandoned summer houses recalled a picture by Rusinol, or a poem by Shelley, where love and death go hand in hand, talking with quiet voice, as though fearing to break the silence of earth and sky. The whistle of the wind sounded among the trees, whose dry leaves mantled the woods with yellow, and a sad-looking sun hid behind the clouds, as though never again would he warm the earth nor cast his light upon the village. Stripped of their leaves, the trees stood with naked arms extended to Heaven, as though imploring mercy; the old houses, the still waters, the rainy sky, the desolate ruins, all seemed sad and desolate. Through the rain trickled the chime of the village bells, grave bells, sad bells, complaining bells, the only voice of that silent village. What were they saying, those bronze laymen, who had called so many generations to prayer and to death with their metal tongues? The voice of temples and monasteries, the voice of the past, the voice of the future, the voice of eternity!

The melancholy of these autumn countrysides op-

pressed Pedro very much, so he shut himself up in his room, and there, sunk in the depths of a great arm-chair, with his arms crossed upon his breast, and his gaze fixed upon the gray ceiling, he abandoned himself to deep melancholy. The great house yawned about him as silent as a Pantheon. The old knight spent his time reading or meditating alone in his room, or accompanied by Don Fernando or Don Elías. Casilda also shut herself in her room with her various tasks, or chattered with her friends. Pedro's bitter mood held him apart from the rest of the household and the companionship of its few guests, and, except at mealtimes, father and son hardly ever saw each other. Even then, they scarcely ever spoke. An atmosphere of hostile frigidity pervaded the house, which even the gay presence and silvery gurgle of Casilda was not always able to dispel.

Pedro used to wish that he could break that great silence which was so harmful to both himself and his father, and several times he tried to talk to him of impersonal matters and affairs; but never an intimacy, never a tender familiarity, never a confidence passed between these two to warm them a little with the pleasant glow of sentiment. Each alike seemed afraid to break through that polite indifference which seemed to be the only way of preserving peace between them. What a drama of pride, disagreement, mortification, and controlled anger there lay in these deep silences or frigid dialogues! Those two poor souls suffered apart, without being able to understand each other. Just one little ray of light, one little flash of understanding, and

father and son could have been united forever, as happened in the moment of Pedro's arrival home; but fate kept them apart and daily separated them further. It is a profound psychological truth that we can live with another person for years and never learn to understand him. Even when speaking the same language, we do not always understand each other, because two brains may react so differently to the same word. And often this is especially true, sadly true in the case of fathers and sons.

For Don Juan Manuel, immersed in memories and histories, with his simple upright soul, it was impossible to understand the mysteries of that other soul, so ardent and burning, nor to divine the turbulence of a heart tortured by doubts and passions and dreams, as was Pedro's. All he could see in his son was an effeminate, grotesque personality, pedantic and vain, juggling with wicked ideas and insensate desires, a traitor to his knightly lineage. He was ashamed of him, ashamed of his words, his notions, his follies. When Pedro first returned to Santillana, his father had cherished hopes of redeeming him, but on beholding his irregular conduct, his audacious conversation, his modern reading and extravagant ideas, so opposed to his own ideas of right and conduct, he was deeply disappointed. One day he happened upon one of the books which Pedro had published in Madrid, and its modern terms and modern notions filled him with horror.

"Take away these books," he cried, "these atrocious books, full of stupidity and brutality, with which you have stained my name! Hide them where no one will

see them. Burn them. Do anything you like with them, but never again let me know the shame of seeing them, of reading them!" and the old nobleman turned on his heel angrily and disdainfully.

Pedro received this affront in silence, and then went quietly away and destroyed to the last volume those burning products of his pen, where once he had poured forth the most sincere beliefs of his soul. On destroying these morsels of his own heart, this abortive progeny of his intellect, he wept bitterly, as though he had destroyed a part of himself. And as the wind dispersed the last of these sterile ashes, his memory went back to the thought of that other child, the son of his own flesh, the poor little fruit of his union with Rosa Luna, who for so many years had also been dust and ashes.

The scorn with which his father had treated him, and which had opened an incurable wound in his heart, caused him to develop a feeling of intellectual superiority to the old hidalgo, and his realization of that superiority induced a mingled pride and sorrow. He saw in his father a simple and silent soul, full of prejudices, and by turns petty or ridiculous; and without seeing or comprehending much that was noble, fine, and venerable in Don Juan Manuel, he regarded him with mingled indifference and despair. But he soon repented of his unfilial attitude, and began to feel a deep and tender pity for the poor old man so sad, so overcome by years and infirmities.

After all, how similar they were, father and son! Pedro, the child of the hidalgo of Santillana, as the present century is the child of the past; old souls in

young bodies; knights of the old régime, bearing neither swords nor armour, but still flaunting the outworn trappings of the past. Old things with new names, old wine fermenting in modern hogsheads. In spite of the intellectual abyss which separated them, the father was linked to the son and the son closely bound to the father by an indestructible bond, an unbreakable chain, of which they were but links, two links in the chain of race, tradition, caste; two generations of the "*Ceballos Infançonados*," the noble stock from which they sprang, now fallen into such lamentable decay.

His deplorable mental state soon began to awake in him those old physical ills which had lain dormant for a while, especially during those first months of his return home, when the peacefulness of the new life had seemed to effect a cure in him; for a while it had seemed as though something energetic and robust had opened within his heart, like a budding rose: the tranquillity, the good food, the peace of the country, had all conspired to this end; for a time he had even entertained the idea of entering a monastery, and as he nourished this thought, there had returned to him a little of the serene mysticism of his early years. This knowledge had greatly encouraged those of his friends who were hoping to bring him back to the paths of faith; his father began to feel more hopeful about him, and Father Elías rejoiced secretly, like a shepherd over a lost lamb returned to the flock; while Juliana began to pay them frequent visits, and to make a point of seeking out her cousin, and artfully inducing him to talk with her on religious topics.

For Juliana had become obsessed by the hope of converting Pedro. She still cherished in secret her girlish love for the renegade, although it had now become overlaid with a mixture of religious ecstasy and sorrowful resignation. Juliana possessed many of the qualities which in other times produced saints and martyrs; especially the spirit of sacrifice, which manifested itself in her devotion to her blind father, from which she derived a sort of melancholy pleasure, a mystic ecstasy of pain, like that of the haircloth shirt and self-flagellation. When she had first received tidings of the return of the prodigal she had felt with a leap at her heart that here was a new field for her endeavours. She really believed that her old love for him was dead, and that her only feeling was one of sympathy and compassion, sanctified and sustained by her sublime and mystic love of God. She did not realize, poor thing, that human love is wont to dress itself in tenderness and tears, and in this disguise plunge its fatal arrow more deeply than ever into the quivering human heart.

And so Juliana abandoned herself ecstatically to an emotion and a mission which she verily believed to be inspired by Heaven, constantly dreaming of luring back to piety the man whom she unwittingly loved, and laying upon the altar of this beautiful dream her womanly pride; for in spite of her mysticism and her piety, Juliana was proud—very proud—as are all true children of Spain, and in the first shock of the grief and mortification which her sweetheart's abandonment of her had occasioned, she had wrapped herself in a mantle of sombre, despairing pride, as the Castilian

envelops himself in his black cape. As years went by the white cloak of piety had displaced this sombre mantle, and now this was oftentimes alternated with the flaming robe of sacrifice.

And the flame of a lasting love glowed ever brighter and brighter.

The first results of this mission to the Philistine were not entirely satisfactory. Pedro listened politely, but with a smile, a sad smile, half-bitter, half-incredulous, which, while it deeply pained the missionary, did not for a moment diminish her ardour. She proceeded calmly with her exhortations, meanwhile lifting a silent prayer for grace to exorcise the evil spirit which dominated him who gazed upon her with such great, dark, ardent, fascinating eyes. She began to feel strangely afraid of those eyes, and at the same time strangely attracted by them.

Father Elías quietly gave her such assistance as he could, in this which they both called a "holy conversion." Under the influence of these two catechists, the one burning with the soul of St. John of the Cross, and the other soft and gentle as the soul of St. Francis, Pedro began to tremble anew with the old anxieties and uncertainties which for a while had lain dormant within his soul. His head whirled with a motley of ideas, his reason tortured him with contradictory doubts and affirmations; but little by little were opening the portals of his heart, whither, in search of a nest, flew the swallows of Calvary.

Pedro was above all things a sentimentalist, with an ardent, impulsive temperament. In spite of his va-

garies of intellect, he was, like his father, governed largely by sentiment; his reason, upon which he so greatly prided himself, was succumbing to mad and undisciplined emotions. Without realizing it, Juliana and the priest, by this constant pressure upon Pedro, were exciting his morbid sensibilities, disturbing his new-found peace, upsetting his moral convictions, and filling him anew with doubt and confusion. And with these mental and moral disturbances there came also a physical breakdown, a renewal of old ailments only partially cured. And now, in the melancholy of the autumn, Pedro felt as though his chalice of bitterness was full. Sunk in the great armchair in his room, with his hands crossed on his breast, he watched the falling rain, and abandoned himself to solitude. He wanted to get away from everybody, especially from that religious persecution which was tormenting him so. He felt tired and sick, weak and overcome; and his head seemed as though it would burst, while his heart hung heavily in his breast, and his lungs seemed choked and gasping. His whole being seemed overcome by a silent and tragic desperation, which even invaded his flesh, tormenting him to the very centres of his nerves and brain-cells.

And thus he passed hours and hours, hidden away in his room like a sick animal. He felt his brain rumbling like a broken machine; his conscience filled with shadows, and his thoughts whirled crazily about him, vainly seeking some settled idea. These crises were wont to end in a sudden access of violent emotion. He would break into terrible fits of uncontrollable weep-

ing, like the sudden outburst of a geyser. It seemed as though his very soul would be washed away in the hot torrent of his tears. He felt as though a voice was saying to him, "Weep, weep like a woman, you who do not know how to live like a man!" And these words reminding him of that poor conquered king, were like the cry of his own weakness, like the reproach of that cruel mother of his melancholy.

He wept for his lost youth, his dead will, the shadow and fear of the future, and all that was in him of child and poet, mystic and prodigal, feminist and sentimentalist. And thus he was weeping that autumn day, with his face hidden in his hands, in the solitude of his room, in front of the open window which looked out over the dead Santillana.

A light noise which sounded behind him caused him to raise his head. Fearing that someone might enter and find him overcome by that unmanly deluge he rose from his chair, and wiped his eyes and swallowed his tears quickly. The door opened, groaning on its rusty hinges, and in the aperture he perceived a little white kitten, which belonged to Silda, which looked up at Pedro with her green eyes, opened the door a little wider with her tiny velvet paw, and entered the room mewling softly.

Pedro could not help laughing at his indiscreet guest, who had thus come to console him, and he played with her a little as he would with a baby; he finally placed her in the big armchair, where she curled herself up into a ball of fluff, purring her pleasure and satisfaction.

And here Pedro left her, shutting his door and going

down the passage to Casilda's room, thinking that he would surprise her by a visit, as the kitten had done with him. He gently opened the door, and peering into the room he saw Silda on her knees praying before a picture of the Virgin. On hearing the door open she rose and confronted Pedro.

"You were praying, Silda?" he said, gently.

"Yes, brother, I was praying."

"And for whom were you praying?"

"For whom should I pray?" responded Silda, sadly.

"I was praying for you, brother."

CHAPTER V

IN THE rooms of his sister, Silda, Pedro always felt calm and soothed. For therein reigned a sweet peace and a calm happiness of youth which fell pleasantly upon his soul. There seemed to be something of his sister's grace and lightness of spirit in every bit of furniture, every nook and corner of the little apartment. Pedro often felt a deep remorse for once having fled from that sisterly refuge. But Silda never reproached him with this. The tenderness of her pure affection wafted upon him in a serene breeze like a breath of celestial grace. She was the good angel of the house, like a Sister of Charity, ready at all hours to comfort and console the sorrowing and afflicted. She would soothe with equal tenderness the bad humours and violent tempers of that old lion, her father, or the bitterness and acrimony which often clouded the spirit of her brother. Like a mother with a couple of rebellious and capricious children, Silda brought up by hand her two troublesome, full-grown infants as well as bearing upon her broad shoulders the weight and heaviness of that great and gloomy house. By the sacrifice of her youth life was rendered endurable to the two selfish men—father and son, to whom she ministered, and to whose bored existence she brought lightness and flavour—tempering the winds of the world to her

black sheep. She was like a caryatide of that old solemn palace.

"Why don't you marry Juliana?" said Silda, suddenly, moved perhaps by a look of sorrow on Pedro's face.

Pedro started. "Marry Juliana?" he exclaimed. "What in the world has put that idea into your head?"

"Isn't it a perfectly natural one? Weren't you childhood sweethearts? And—well, I think the idea is a good one. You ought to settle down, assume responsibilities. Do you expect to pass your whole life in this wild way? Juliana is a saint, and although she's never spoken of this since that day long ago when you first left here, I believe—that is—I think—it wouldn't be difficult——"

"Oh, shut up," cried Pedro, angrily. "Don't talk to me about such things. You're foolish."

"But why? Why shouldn't we talk it over? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You know how much she cares for you."

"And I care for her still. But—but——"

"But what?"

"It's too late! Entirely too late. I have no longer any right to such happiness."

"See now! I've always said that you weren't right in your head! *Why* haven't you any right to happiness? Ha, ha," and Silda broke into laughter.

"Don't laugh at me, Silda. I'm terribly in earnest. What right have I after all my years of debauchery and riotous living to offer myself to this exquisite saint? To bring my polluted soul to her pure love; to seek her

out after all these years, with my illusions destroyed—my youth gone. They call me bad. Maybe I am, but I still have a conscience.”

“Brother, you’re crazy,” cried Silda, impatiently. “To hear you talk one would think that you were Methuselah, when you’re hardly past forty. Bah! And you call yourself a man of the world! One would think that you had only been born yesterday! A man forty years old is in the flower of his youth——”

“Sister Silda, sometimes I feel as though I were a hundred.”

“It’s a good thing for you then that you don’t show it in your face! Of course you have a few gray hairs but that runs in the family. They say our father was white at thirty. And after all, Juliana is no longer a child. Only four or five years younger than you at the most.”

“Be quiet, girl. It’s no use your insisting further. You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“That’s just like you. ‘I don’t know what I’m talking about,’ ‘I don’t understand anything,’ ‘And I’m a poor ignorant creature.’ Well, maybe you’re not much better than I am! As if I don’t know you! Hmm. In spite of all your wildness you’re nothing but a big baby. I’ve seen you cry about nothing just like a silly child. At this very moment your eyes are as red as two tomatoes. Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? I’m only a woman, and I don’t cry about nothing. On the contrary, I’m always laughing like a crazy woman. Sometimes I say to myself: ‘Can it be that I have no heart?’ But then a little angel comes and whispers

to me: 'Don't be a fool, you're right. Laugh, laugh; in Heaven everybody laughs. It's only in the inferno that there is weeping.'"

Pedro smiled tolerantly. "It's a good thing that you do laugh, Silda. You are the light of this house. God has placed you here as He places flowers, close to gloomy sepulchres, in order to show us that holy happiness is possible even in the most dismal places."

Silda laughed again. "All right, brother. That's enough of blarney. Now, go do what I told you: marry Juliana."

"Marry Juliana!" Pedro's voice contained a world of tragedy. "Marry Juliana! How am I going to offer that holy woman my heart, worn and spent with other loves? With what horror do I recall the picture which I have so often seen of men like myself, who, too late, try to establish a home in which they live without illusion, deceiving the world perhaps, but never deceiving their own hearts, filled with remorse for their ancient sins, which often, alas, they behold inscribed upon the innocent flesh of their children. No, ah, no. Never will I perpetuate my own mistakes. Never will I profane the sacred name of Love. Love which was made for true youth, with neither gray hairs nor ancient follies; which was made to shine with the radiance of Spring and not with the shadows of Autumn. The love of Autumn is a rain of withered leaves. It is too late, Silda. Too, too, late!"

Silence fell upon the brother and sister, and they sat sadly looking through the windows of the balcony. The rain had ceased and the sky, a pure violet blue,

came from a distance, almost from another world. Have you ever noticed the nasal and melancholy timbre of a voice which tries to sing just after crying? Well, that's the way everything in Santillana sounds to me."

Luis smiled at these extravagant observations of his friend, and bearing down upon the pedals with his deformed feet went on playing.

"Listen to this pastoral of Scarlotti. Doesn't it sound sweet on my little old piano, almost like a harp or clavichord. Sometimes I believe that this old instrument gains something by reason of its very age, like ancient wine or an antique violin. There's a softness, a melancholy, a sweetness that new things do not possess."

"If you had only brought your violin," he went on, noting that Pedro was empty-handed, "we could have practised the 'Kreutzer Sonata.'"

"I'd rather have you play me something by Chopin. I'm tired, blue; I'd like to listen to something soft and soothing."

"What shall it be, a waltz, a nocturne, a ballad?"

"Play the concerto in E minor."

"How romantic you are."

Luis laid his hands upon the keys and with a power amazing in one so dwarfed and deformed attacked the first powerful movement of that gigantic concerto; and next came that exquisite, romantic, bell-like *apasionata*, full of tenderness and profound morbidity. When he paused, he found Pedro with tears in his eyes. "How wonderfully you play," exclaimed the latter. "What a pity that you can't get out of here and go to

some more favourable spot where you would be truly appreciated, and where, on the other hand, you could enjoy and appreciate good music. Have you ever heard a real virtuoso?"

"Never, excepting once in my life I heard Säuer. If you only knew how sad I am. I don't know—I don't know—how shall I express myself—I feel that I am not quite a fool. I have here in my heart a something which God gave me: grace, sentiment, poetry, which perhaps you would call inspiration. Ever since I was a little boy, as you know, I have consoled myself by singing. At night I used to make up little songs and sing and cry myself to sleep. And later on, when I learned how to play, it seemed as though the heavens opened above me. This, I said to myself, is *me, myself*, which I am going to cultivate. There were so many things in my soul I wanted to express, and music seemed the only way to express it. You remember how when I was little I used to stump around on my crutches the other boys made fun of me, and even used to throw stones at me. And later on in school it was the same way. I was the butt of everybody. I used to go off by myself and cry, and my heart became full of bitterness at such gross injustice. And then when I learned how to play, my music became my comfort and consolation. I dreamed that some day I would really amount to something in this, my music. People told me that I had talent, and I began to believe them, for I felt something strange that went stirring within myself. But it has all gone, dear Pedro, all gone. Here I am, shut up in this little village, and I used to have

dreams of Paris, Vienna, Italy. Happy you who have been to Paris."

"We all," responded Pedro, gravely, "all of us are just like children, dazzled by thoughts of the beyond, the great unknown. Paris! Paris! Everywhere I go, even in this remote corner of the mountain, everybody in the world dreams of leaving the place where he is, travelling to the far-away unknown. In every part of the world humanity dreams this same dream. Do not deplore, my dear friend, the fact that you have been shut up in this remote corner. See how I have come back here, seeking a little happiness and repose. Why dream of glories, vanity of vanities, which like dust returns to dust in the end?"

"Do you know," replied Luis, "that I now believe that this remote spot is the most beautiful in all the world? It seems here that the sun has suddenly arisen and is shining on my soul. Do you not know? Do you not guess? I am in love, Pedro!"

"Indeed, I never would have believed it possible! St. Louis of Gonzaga in love!"

"Don't make fun of me. I was going to confess something to you, but——"

Rising on his crutches, his poor feet dragging inertly, Luis painfully propelled himself across the room, and sat down beside Pedro on the sofa. He was blushing and smiling. "It is indeed true," he said. "And I'll tell you all about it. You want to know her name, well—it's Rosuca."

"Rosuca!" exclaimed Pedro, for a moment off his guard.

"Yes, Rosuca. Why should you think that so strange?"

"I do not think it at all strange," replied Pedro, repressing his surprise. "Why should I think it strange?"

"Yes, yes, I know it's bold of me, terribly bold. She is so beautiful, she who is like the sun in May. Why would she care for a miserable creature like me, stupid, deformed, without either fame or money." And poor Luis hung his drooping head in shame.

"You haven't said anything to her yet?" asked Pedro.

"What can I say to her? The very thought of saying anything to her fills me with shame. And if you only knew how much I suffer, even though it is a suffering mixed with pleasure. I hate myself for being such a scoundrel and such a coward and yet I go about gloating over her image which is engraved on my heart. I have confessed this to no one but you, you, the friend of my childhood. I wouldn't want anybody but you even to suspect it. It would make me a laughing-stock, a——"

"For pity's sake, dear Luis, do not talk like this. Don't take it so tragically. Everything in this world has its remedy. She's a gallant creature and well merits a sacrifice. Why shouldn't she love you? Pull yourself together and say something to her."

"Oh, no, I can not. I never could. It is ridiculous to think that a man as old as I am should blush like a girl and stammer before a woman, and yet that's just what I do. And after all, I'm almost old enough to be her father. But what am I going to do?"

"Would you wish me to——? Could I do something? Prepare the way a little? She often comes to our house, you know. I would do anything in the world for you."

"No! I couldn't let you think of doing such a thing. I'd die of shame." And Luis caught hold of Pedro's arm as though fearful he might escape from him, and go straight off to say something to Rosuca.

"Oh, you foolish boy," said Pedro, moved by the claw-like clutch of those entreating hands. "Can't you trust in my discretion? Go along with you. I'm not going to discuss it with you any more. Just entrust the whole matter to me. I will arrange everything."

Poor Luis was torn between his love and his timidity. "It won't do any good, not a bit of good. Why, oh, why should a man like me be permitted to live in this world?"

And his poor voice trembling over his halting ideas, Luis seated himself at the piano to express in that sublime language of the soul those torturing emotions which he was fighting off so valiantly. He played the adagio of Beethoven's Sonata in C minor, that exquisite, pathetic "*Claire de Lune*"—the "Moonlight sonata"; that rich, solemn, religious music into which the colossal soul of the composer has wrought all his melancholy. The wailing minor notes and crashing chords of the music filled the room; and the old piano, seeming to recover its youthful voice, vibrated under the touch of the unhappy artist who, trembling with emotion and sorrow, seemed to tear the notes from the very depths of his heart!

"Oh, music!" exclaimed Pedro, as the last chords of that sublime adagio died away into silence; "serene temple of the sad, refuge of the unhappy, religion of those who hunger and thirst for the Infinite; holy invention of man, groping for God and seeking for the word of revelation of the great void of the universe. There is nothing in the world excepting love which so profoundly moves our hearts and soothes our souls. Even the hard hearts of monsters and wild beasts are moved by melody. Oh, Father Pythagoras, you were indeed a kindly observer of truth when you first discovered the plastic reality of numbers and listened in the silence of the night to the grave rhythm of the stars, the harmony of the planets, and the music of the spheres."

And submerged in a wave of sentiment and emotion which the music had awakened, Pedro and Luis felt that they, too, were listening with old Pythagoras to that solemn music of the spheres.

CHAPTER VI

WITH her finger pressed to her mouth, her green eyes winking roguishly, her tiny feet noiseless as a mouse, Rosuca tiptoed to the door of Pedro's room, where she knocked twice and receiving no answer, lifted the latch and peeped inside. Then signalling to Donia and Silda who followed just behind her threw open the door, and the three girls entered.

Rosuca and Donia were blushing with a mixture of timidity and mischief. Never before had they entered that room which loomed just beyond their ken, grave, mysterious, and pricking their curiosity which aspired to explore all its nicks and corners. Once inside, however, they were as much overcome as though they had traversed the portal of some mysterious chamber, in a mysterious palace. And half-attempting to speak they snickered together in a corner.

The room bore testimony to the disorderly habits of its owner: the floor strewn with books, the table littered with papers, in the corner a half-opened trunk, and the bed unkempt and unmade. For when his moods were on him Pedro forbade any one to enter his room even to put it in order, which was a great trial to poor Silda who was such a good housekeeper, and loved neatness and regularity. She was greatly mortified now at having the girls see the place look so untidy, the piles of books

in the corner, his violin sticking out of its half-opened case, the flowers withering in their vases.

"Open those windows," she cried, in a tone of annoyance, "and let in the sun and the light. This room looks like a giant's cave. Good gracious, what a terrible looking place. Come and help me put it in order. You, Rosuca, gather the books and place them on this stand. And you, Donia, hang his clothes in the wardrobe, but first air them and sun them a little. I'll make up the bed and sweep the floor. It will take the biggest broom in the house. Why, there are cobwebs everywhere, even on the glass of the windows!"

Silda went in quest of her broom, leaving Rosuca and Donia alone, and delighted at having their curiosity at last satisfied. Instead of obeying Silda and gathering up the clothing and the books, they went about inspecting everything like two playful little mice.

"Just see what is here," exclaimed Rosuca, opening the drawer of the bureau.

"Be careful, girl, Silda may come. Close that," cried the more timid Donia.

"Be quiet, you little fool. Don't you see it is the picture of a woman?"

"So it is."

"Who could she be?"

"Isn't she young and pretty?"

"She must be some old sweetheart of his."

"I suppose so. But look! Here is a name on the back, 'La Camelia!' Oh, Donia, this looks to me like an entanglement."

"To me, also. But what is this I see?"

"For Heaven's sake," screamed Rosuca, in terror. "It's a pistol. Don't touch it. It may be loaded. But look! Here is another picture. This one is a little boy."

"Oh, let me see it. How thin he is, and how ugly! What does it say here on the back?"

"'Barcelona, Paris,' and two scratched-out signatures."

"Who can that child be? I wonder if the poor little creature is dead. Don't you see one of these names has a cross next to it?"

"Oh, let's close this up, someone may come and catch us."

"Oh, what a drawer full of things! Look at them! Handkerchiefs, cravats, more books, a bottle of cologne, a cigarette case, a sock."

"Close it, girl, close it. Silda is coming."

"Quickly they shut that drawer of secrets, and blushing with shame and inquisitiveness they began to make a great show of gathering up the books and clothing just as Silda appeared in the doorway, her skirt folded back, a handkerchief tied peasant fashion over her ruddy hair, and a broom in her hand.

"Are you still fiddling around without having put away the things so that I could sweep? What busybodies you are! I suppose you've peeped into everything. If Pedro had only caught you at it!"

The two girls blushed deeper than ever at the idea of the owner surprising them over their prying.

It did not take long for them to put the room in order, and leave it shining with cleanliness. Then Rosuca and Donia began to dance about the newly

swept floor until they stopped, laughing and breathless. At that Silda closed the windows, drew down the shades, and burned a little quill of aromatic paper which she used as a disinfectant. And the room appeared so clean, so fresh, so sweet-smelling that it gave one pleasure to enter it.

"The bad boy doesn't deserve our doing so much for him. He hasn't any use for brooms and brushes and disinfectants."

"What a great lot of books!" exclaimed Rosuca, looking at the overflowing stand. "What does your brother do with so many books?"

"He uses them to break his head with," replied Silda, frowning. "Darn his old books, anyway. They've turned his head completely! If I had my way I'd like to throw them all out of the window into the orchard, and make them into a bonfire that would reach to the skies."

"Don't talk like that," exclaimed Rosuca, evidently pained. "They are such pretty books. And wouldn't it be a shame to burn up that which it took somebody so much trouble to write? And, on the other hand, books teach us things. Hasn't your father got books? Hasn't Father Elías got books?"

"There are good books and bad books," replied Silda, gravely. "There are books which are worse than poison. It was books about knighthood that drove Don Quixote crazy. And I sometimes think my brother is as crazy as Don Quixote de la Mancha."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rosuca, with a gesture. "Has your brother got books about knighthood?"

Rosuca had left her seat and began looking over the books on the stand.

"Could these be bad books?" she inquired, taking one up, but evidently afraid to open it.

"I've never even opened one of them," replied Silda, indifferently. "They don't look to me as though they were very good Catholics. It wouldn't be a bad idea to put them all in the fire."

"Oh, let's look into them," exclaimed Donia, eagerly.

"What does that one say here?" inquired Silda.

"Where?" said Rosuca, with her arms full of volumes.

"That big red book with gold letters."

"This one?"

"Yes, let's see."

"Oh! 'In-ti-mate Diary,'" spelled out Rosuca.

"An intimate diary!" exclaimed Silda. "I don't like that word 'intimate.' It sounds as though it weren't holy. What kind of intimacies could those be?"

"Oh, read, read a little," said Rosuca, giving her the book.

Silda opened it with not too much eagerness and began to read.

"'Only one thing is necessary: to possess God.' All the senses, all the forces of the spirit and the soul, all outside resources, are nothing but avenues of escape for the light of Divinity; are nothing but ways of understanding and adoring God.'"

"Oh!" said Donia. But that sounds like a book of devotion."

"Without doubt. This is a good book," pronounced Silda. "Leave it here in the most conspicuous spot."

"And that other one?"

"Let's see. 'The Life of Jesus' by Renan."

"Oh, how wonderful! Now do you see?" said Rosuca, emphatically. "And it has a picture of Calvary, and this in the front must be a portrait of the author."

"What a good and venerable face the old man has. What a holy face! He must be a saint."

"A saint, Silda?" inquired Donia, sticking her little brown head into the book. "How can it be a saint when he hasn't got a halo around his head? Saints always wear halos."

"And here is another," said Rosuca, holding up a beautiful white-and-gold volume. "Look, it is by St. Teresa, and this other by Father Luis de Granada. It is called 'The Guide of Sinners.' And here's another one, 'The Names of Christ.'"

"Oh," exclaimed Donia, delighted. "And these are the bad books which you say your brother reads? Go along with you. Why, it looks like the library of a monk. This is indeed a miracle as though by a stroke all his bad books had been changed into holy ones."

"Didn't I say so?" remarked Rosuca, happily. "Your brother is surely a son of God. Oh, what wonderful books! This is by a priest, by Father Coloma. It's called 'Little Sins.' It doesn't sound like the kind of a book that a priest ought to write."

"It's a novel," said Silda. "Perhaps it talks about sinners in order to show us how to reform them."

"In all events it can't be so very holy," replied Rosuca, unconvinced.

"Be quiet, woman," said Donia. "Do you think that you know more than Father Coloma? Put the book where it belongs."

"Ah-ha," exclaimed Rosuca, with pretended annoyance. "Now the devil is coming. I see him lifting up one of his horns."

"And I see his tail," answered Donia.

"Look here what I have spied—'Paul and Virginia.'"

"And I have 'The Lovers.'"

"Two lovers who are embracing each other. Into the fire with that."

"Here's a picture of Virginia half undressed."

"Oh, oh! That Virginia must be a bad one! Into the fire with this also!"

"Oh, what a pity. It's such a pretty book with such a beautifully coloured cover!"

"And here comes a good one," exclaimed Rosuca, triumphantly.

"What is that?"

"A volume of philosophy."

"To the dickens with philosophy," replied Silda, vehemently.

"Father Elías says that philosophy is a wicked and dangerous thing."

"But, girls, this is by a priest! By Father Balmes," replied Donia, defending the book.

"Another priest," said Rosuca, gravely. "Well, it doesn't matter. Into the fire with him. So many priests are making me tired. Doubtless they are all renegades or Protestants."

"No, daughter," exclaimed Silda, "Father Balmes

was a very wise and learned priest. I have heard Father Elías speak of him!”

“And still more priests,” said Rosuca, laughing. “Jacinto Vergaguer’s ‘Flowers of Calvary’. It’s written in English and I can’t quite understand it. And this is one by Richepin. It looks like poetry. ‘Les Fleurs de Mal’ by Bau-Baude-laïre——”

“Oh, if it’s poetry, you can leave it,” said Silda. “I believe that in poetry nobody can say anything bad. Poetry is so pretty. My brother sometimes writes poetry; very sweet poetry, that sounds like St. John of the Cross.”

“Here they are, here they are,” exclaimed Rosuca, excitedly, dancing about with a paper which she was waving like a flag.

“What is that?” inquired Silda.

“Verses, verses by Pedro. Look, it is in his own handwriting. Let us see! Let us see! Give them to me and I’ll read them.”

“Oh, do read them, Silda, because you can understand them better.”

Silda took the paper and seating herself beside the window with the two girls beside her, she began to read the verses which her brother had written. When she had finished silence filled the room, and was broken by Rosuca who, wiping her eyes, remarked: “Well, they’ve made me cry. Did you ever read anything so sweet and so sad? I am going to ask your brother to give me a copy of these verses. Do you think he will, Silda?”

“What do you want them for?” said Silda, laughing.

"I'd like to keep them, to read them when I am alone, to learn them by heart. Don't laugh at me."

Poor Rosuca looked sad; and her mischievous green eyes were filled with tears. For in spite of her mischief and coquetry she was a tender-hearted creature and under a laughing exterior possessed a deep vein of romance and sentimentality.

"This was love poetry," said Donia. "I wonder who your brother can be in love with?"

"In love?" exclaimed Silda, laughing loudly. "I never knew that he was in love."

"But that poetry was all about love."

"Oh, you foolish child. Don't you know that poets are always imagining those things. Besides, the love which he talks about in these verses is the love of charity, the love of God. Don't you know that even St. Teresa wrote about love, but it was a divine love. 'The Flame of a Living Love,' she called it, I believe."

"Well," said Donia, smiling maliciously. "Just the same I believe that your brother is in love."

"Maybe he is in love with Rosuca," laughed Silda.

"Now you're teasing me and I don't like it," whimpered Rosuca, blushing.

"Never mind, Rosuca," said Silda, consolingly. And at this moment they heard footsteps in the corridor. They arose and were about to flee into the sun-parlour when Pedro appeared in the doorway.

"Well, well," he cried. "Is this an invasion? What are you all doing here? Who has given you permission to assault my castle? And look how you have fixed things up!"

The three girls huddled together close to the sun-parlour without saying anything, Silda laughing, and Donia and Rosuca blushing and nervous.

"What's the matter with you, Rosuca?" he said. "You look as though you had been crying."

"It's these verses which have made her cry," said Silda, showing him the paper.

Rosuca nervously covered her face with her fan.

"The child is so romantic," continued Silda, jokingly. "She enjoys sorrow. And what you have written here is so beautifully sorrowful. She says she would like to keep some of these verses and learn them by heart."

"Oh, sweet little Rosuca," exclaimed Pedro, moved and flattered. "Sweet little heart of a dove! Do you really like these verses? Well, then, take them, they're yours. No, you don't need to thank me. And in return for your appreciation of my genius I will pardon your sin of having entered my room and ferreting out my secrets. Take the verses, Rosuca. Keep them. What better refuge could they have than your lovely hands? Some day, when your little heart knows more about love, you will understand them better than you do now."

Pleased and flattered by his words, Rosuca timidly held out her hand for the paper which she hurriedly thrust into the pocket of her apron, and the three girls left the room.

Pedro was pleased and touched. The green eyes of Rosuca seemed penetrating his heart. For a long time he had taken much pleasure in talking with the girl, in playing with her as if she were a little angora kitten,

even though he realized it was a dangerous enjoyment. Was he playing with love? Pedro recalled his poor friend, the organist, and the great passion which stirred in the heart of that timid and afflicted creature. Was he being a traitor to his friend, even though only in thought? If so, he must nip in the bud this yellow flower of disloyalty. Well, he would. And he made the firm resolve that the next time he saw Rosuca he would fulfill his promise to Luisito, and tell her the tale of the poor boy's love and plead for him as John Alden with Priscilla.

CHAPTER VII

TELL me, Rosuca, have you never thought about leaving Santillana?"

"Why, what an idea, Don Pedro! And why would I want to leave Santillana?"

"Did it never occur to you that it might be pleasant to live some place where it was gayer and more attractive to a pretty young girl like you?"

Rosuca blushed, bowed her head, and began to tap nervously upon her apron with her fingers.

"Has no voice ever called to you, bidding you change this sad life for a happier one? Have you never thought, as you looked into your mirror, that one so beautiful should not pass her whole life here? Would you not like to see great cities, where pretty girls dance with their sweethearts to the sound of music, and listening to words which please them even more than the music?"

The girl blushed still more deeply, her eyes cast down, and her fingers running pleats into the strings of her apron.

They were at the end of the village, where a muddy little brook wound its way in front of a damp, old house. The autumn sun, soft and pale, was reflected in the waters, and the last of the swallows who hid their nests in the eaves of the mysterious old house

darted about above them; while an enormous ox was drinking from the brook, his great sleepy head stretched out over the water.

"Would you like to be a nun and live always in a convent as quiet and silent as that of Regina-Coeli, dressed in black, with a white coif, growing old sweetly in the shadow of the church, and finally be interred in a cloister under the cypresses; or would you prefer to be a princess in a distant country, arrayed in lace and velvet, with a fillet of gold upon your head, and be enthroned on a seat of ebony and ivory, listening to the music of an invisible orchestra, while the knights of your court recited madrigals, and whispered sweet words of love in your ear? Or would you like better to spend your days in a flower-filled garden in Grenada, in a beautiful Arabian courtyard, like that of Lindaraja, harking to the trickle of fountains and the singing of nightingales, and a gallant lover close beside you? Which is your dream, Rosuca?"

"What have I ever done to you that you should make fun of me like this?" replied the girl, lifting her humid eyes and blushing face. She suddenly seemed very sad, as she leaned on the wall, looking down into the ravine below her.

"I making fun of you, Rosuca?" replied Pedro, gently. "You don't believe that, do you? I, who am your good friend. Why do you think so badly of me? All I wish is your welfare. You are now a woman. Why shouldn't you think of such things? I have always taken a great interest in you. Wouldn't you like me to find you a sweetheart?"

Rosuca blushed again and, with bowed head, in a very low voice, murmured:

"But who would ever think of caring for me? Go along with you."

"Who wouldn't care for you? And if I were to tell you that there was someone who is ready to die for you, who is always longing to see you, to talk to you, and feels that he doesn't dare to? Now, Rosuca, don't be so shy. Be frank with me."

"God help me," she said, "what things you think of with which to tease poor Rosuca, who doesn't understand about these things, and has hardly ever heard anybody talk of them! What do I know about the worlds which you describe, princesses and gallants and sweethearts? Why do you question me in this way? What interest could a gentleman who has run about the world have in the life and thoughts of a poor little country girl, who has not yet put on long dresses, and who knows nothing of the world beyond excepting that once she spent three days in the city!" And Rosuca, the little coquette, stuck out her tongue at him, and chattered on with a charming volubility.

"To come here with stories about princesses and nuns to the poor Rosuca! Now listen. I was once on a time a princess."

"How? When?"

"One summer there came to Santillana the marchioness Doña Maria, granddaughter of Don Blas, who is a charming and good lady, and when she came to Santillana she gave the most wonderful parties in her house. At one time, at one of these parties—I

don't remember what they called it—everybody dressed up in old-fashioned clothes, and they dressed me as a princess and seated me next to the daughter of the marchioness, who was dressed as a queen; and we sat on golden chairs, and the gentlemen all kissed our hands and talked poetry to us, and they married me to a little prince, and we danced afterward in the garden oh, a beautiful dance!—which they called a minuet.”

“Go on, go on!” cried Pedro, enchanted by her naïveté. “And so you have indeed been a princess! Oh, you rogue! And you told me that you didn't know about such things! What you women don't know, even before you're in long dresses! Well, I suppose that having once been a real princess, the sweetheart whom I am going to find for you won't seem like very much.”

“But, listen,” exclaimed Rosuca, “I have made up my mind to give the mitten to the first person who ever dared to talk to me in that way, and believe me, sir, I have the name of knitting the best mittens in the whole of Santillana,” and she made a mocking little face at him.

“Many thanks, Rosuca, for my part as ambassador for those mittens.”

“Don't be angry if I talk nonsense,” she exclaimed, winking at him mischievously. “You know you really started it with your own fooling, and I only followed your lead. If you really are ready to talk sense . . .” and frightened by her own audacity, the girl blushed up to her eyes.

“I promise you, Rosuca, to speak nothing but the

truth. You think that I was fooling before. Well, believe me, there is in Santillana someone who cares for you more than any one in the whole world," and on saying this Pedro, going a little too far for an ambassador, drew nearer to Rosuca and gazed upon her with great tenderness in his eyes.

"And where may this phenomenon be?" laughed Rosuca.

"Who?"

"This man who you say cares for me so much."

"He lives not very far from here."

"And why doesn't he come and tell me so himself?"

"Well, you see, it's this way: He feels that he doesn't dare. He is rather slow of speech, and so he wants me to tell you for him. You can give me your reply."

Rosuca at once became serious. Suddenly she exclaimed:

"You're deceiving me! You're making fun of me!"

"My word of honour and I am speaking the truth."

"Well, who can it be? I hope it isn't one of those good-for-nothings who come here to work at crushing olives."

"No, indeed, nothing like that! While he isn't Prince John of the Indies, he is a fine and decent person, an agreeable and even somewhat cultured man."

"I don't understand," said Rosuca, passing her hand across her forehead, "but I do know that here there isn't anybody who could have fixed his affections on me. I know that there is no one about here but old men," and on saying this she made a little gesture of sorrow.

"There is someone here who, while he isn't a boy, is still not an old man. Don't you understand, Rosuca? Think a moment."

"Is he some stranger?"

"No, he was born in Santillana, and in Santillana he still lives."

"Do I know him?"

"Indeed you do."

Rosuca looked up at Pedro, blushing coquettishly, for her mischievous little mind was quick to note the effect of her graces upon Pedro, and with sidelong glances she also noted the impassioned tenderness of Pedro. He, in turn, warmed to the dialogue, finding a real pleasure in his mission, and beginning to feel strange emotions stirring in his heart: a rising jealousy, a wicked desire himself to pluck that sweet human fruit. And then there came into his mind the memory of his absent friend, the poor musician, who so tenderly had entrusted him with this mission of love.

"Won't you give me a little hint?" went on Rosuca, impatiently, "as to who this wonderful person is?"

"I want you to guess it for yourself. I want your own heart to ferret out the secret of this unknown lover. That's a better way, because it will prove that you aren't indifferent to him."

"But give me just a hint, one little hint. I will name this one and that one, and you can tell me whether I am hot or cold, according as I am near or far from the truth."

"All right!" exclaimed Pedro. "Now we'll begin."

"Is he good-looking? Fair?"

"Cold," responded Pedro.

"Is he dark?"

"Warm," he answered, laughing mischievously.

"Is he older than I?"

"Warm."

"Has he ever been away from here?"

"Very warm."

"And you say that he is a gentleman, that he is a very good friend of yours?"

"Be careful that you don't burn yourself."

Rosuca looked suddenly up at Pedro, and fixing her eyes on him turned redder than a rose, and covered her face with her fan. Then there issued from the hollow of her hands a little sound that was a mixture of laughing and crying. Pedro looked at her, surprised. In a rapid little movement which she made he suddenly saw her face. Then she burst out laughing, laughing and laughing like a mad thing. Then, as suddenly, she became serious again, serious and pensive, and it seemed as though every drop of blood in her body had flowed up into her face. She didn't dare to look at Pedro.

"Have you guessed who it is?" he asked.

"Yes, I believe so," she responded, and again broke out laughing, and again became pensive and sad.

"I don't understand, girl, why you're laughing so. I never told you that this man was such a prodigy. I know that you deserve something better, Rosuca, but, on the other hand, he isn't to be despised. He is good, honourable, he loves you."

"People are going to laugh when they know," exclaimed Rosuca. "They will make fun of me," and she again covered her face with her hands.

"People are bad, Rosuca, and perhaps they will make fun of you a little, but they will soon get used to the idea——"

"But whatever put this idea into your head?"

"The great love that I bear for both of you."

"But I am still filled with wonder at it all. As Donia so well says, 'These cocks with so many spurs.'"

"Look here, Rosuca, let's talk seriously. You ought to think about this more earnestly. You are nearly eighteen, and, if you will pardon my saying so, look older. You should begin to think about your future. Here in Santillana there isn't much choice. The years go quickly, and I am sure you do not wish to 'remain to dress saints,' as the saying goes. Perhaps you would look more kindly upon a sweetheart of your own age, young and handsome, who would murmur sweet foolishnesses in your ear, and would run after you through the orchard, pelting you with apple-blossoms. These little romances, pleasant though they are, after all don't amount to very much. Your mother is very delicate; and your uncle, Don Elías, very old. Some day, before you know it, you may find yourself alone in the world, and then what would become of you? I'm talking to you about these sad things, Rosuca, in order that you may well understand your situation, and the deep interest which I really take in you. What you need is care, serious love, and a good man who will be fond of you and look after you. It is true that he whom I

speak of is older than you are and could hardly be called handsome; but he has a good heart, a fine character, lives frugally, and this very difference in age is a guarantee of his future faithfulness. You see, Rosuca, I am talking to you as I would to a grown woman. You're not any longer a child. You are a woman, and ought to be married. What's your answer?"

Rosuca hung her head and murmured confusedly:

"Don't think badly of me. Everything that you say is quite true. But it's all so sudden. I will think about it. I'll talk to my uncle. It is for him to say."

"If that is all, I myself will speak with Don Elías. But it is necessary for you to tell me something first. I must finish my ambassadorship happily. May I say so to my friend?"

"Oh, you are trying to deceive me!" she said, as though talking to herself. "Isn't this laughable? Silda was right. Donia was right. Both were right. They saw how things were. But when one doesn't understand about such things—— The truth is that I did feel for you a little—a little kindly. But why don't you say so plainly, instead of stirring me up so? At first I was sorry for you, seeing you so sad and unhappy, and I often used to like to look sideways at you, and every day you looked more like—more like——Oh, with your face like the Nazarene—well—oh, such things as you think! I used to laugh inside of myself and say, 'If Don Pedro only knew!' But what was he to know? What a little fool I was! And then you used to draw near to me and look at me so—so—well, who would

ever have thought it? And now—well, isn't it really something to laugh about? Holy Mother!" and the poor foolish creature laughed and cried by turns, overcome by happiness and shame, delighted and suffering at the same time.

Pedro stood aghast, trying in vain to think of some way to check that flood of ingenuous naïveté.

"But, child, you haven't thought——! Well, what am I going to say to her? How am I going to disillusion her? Women are the devil, even when they're still in short dresses."

Thus thought Pedro, and thus he debated to himself, overcome with remorse that was still mingled with a little pleasure and satisfaction at the thought that this lovely creature had centred upon himself the love which he was pledged to solicit for his friend. His heart within him stirred and leaped, but he had given his word to his friend. There was a moment in which his conscience wavered, the moment in which the tearful eyes of Rosuca looked up at him, brimming with shame and love. And for a moment he felt like throwing loyalty to the winds and seizing within his arms the sweet gift of youth and beauty which so ingenuously she offered him. His soul trembled with passion, but the ancient honour of his race rose up before him, and he thrust the viper back into the depths of his heart.

"Rosuca," he cried, "what are you saying! The man who loves you is Luis Calderon! The organist! My friend, Luis Calderon!"

On hearing these words the girl seemed like one stunned, and for a moment Pedro feared that she would

be indeed overcome by the terrific rush of blood that suffused her face with its flaming torrent.

"Oh, my God!" she cried, "And I believed!—Holy Virgin, my mother!" and she burst into wild weeping, trying to tear herself away from Pedro, who held her back, saying gently:

"Oh, Rosuca, poor little Rosuca! Luis is waiting for me. What shall I say to him? He will die of grief if ever he knows the truth. Oh, Rosuca, in charity!"

But Rosuca only sobbed and choked, trying to pull away from Pedro's detaining hand.

"Let me go!" she cried. "Let me go! It's all your fault. You've been making fun of me. Let me go!"

"Oh, Rosuca, have pity on Luis! He loves you so much."

But in reply she raised her head, distorted with grief and tears, and cried:

"Tell Luis to go to the devil! And you go with him! Rosuca need not lack for a lover, even though he be only one of those good-for-nothings who came here to work at crushing olives!" And breaking away from him, she ran like a tortured doe, and never stopped until she reached her own house.

For a long time Pedro stood motionless beside the wall, overcome with unhappiness and remorse. Was it to be his fate that, whenever he touched innocence and peace, he was to injure and torture it? How cruelly had he hurt that poor little heart! He looked down into the water, lost in sorrowful thought. When he raised his head, he saw, crossing the square in the

distance, his cousin Juliana and her blind father. The old man walked slowly, his unseeing eyes fixed before him, while his daughter carefully guided his tottering footsteps. And as he watched them round the corner and disappear, Pedro's sorrow and remorse deepened and intensified.

CHAPTER VIII

JUST as he was about to take his way homeward he felt his shoulders grasped in two strong hands, and turning, perceived the gigantic figure of his uncle, Don Rodrigo, his sardonic and cynical face grinning down upon him. Pedro trembled on seeing him, dreading to have to listen at this time to all those rough jokes and coarse horse-play with which the old soldier always regaled him, and which he knew would now be an especial torture to his tingling nerves.

“What the devil are you doing in this out-of-the-way corner of the town?” exclaimed Don Rodrigo, pouting and frowning like a whipped child, and as usual, without giving him time to reply the old soldier continued, catching his nephew by the arm:

“They tell me, my dear nephew, that you are always mournful and sad these days, and are regretting that you have come back here to Santillana. This doesn’t surprise me, even though I always believed that the devil turned friar when he wearied of his flesh-pots. Here there is neither society to divert you nor fools to praise you; neither friends to deceive you nor maidens to ensnare you; no wise men to teach you, nor poets to enthuse you. A man like you, accustomed to such grace and culture, may very well be lonely and full of regrets on finding himself among such a bunch

of antiques as us, country girls and peasant women. Isn't it so? But there are really people who make fun of your sadness, and do not understand it. What do they know of your philosophical anxieties, your psychological conflicts, of all those grave problems which have chased away your colour and embittered your life? What ignorant old fools they are, to make fun of the misery and noble ambitions of youth! They have forgotten that youth feasts upon novelty and philosophy, that it hates the old and adores the new. Long live youth, and death and destruction to the aged!"

Don Rodrigo declaimed all this in a tragic tone and mocking air of terrible seriousness, and Pedro listened to him with such patience as he could summon, trying in vain to think up some excuse for leaving him. But the old man held him by the hand, and noting Pedro's apparent eagerness to leave him said with asperity:

"Why all this haste, my dear nephew? You cannot know how much I enjoy your company, and how fond I am of you. Did I not dandle you on my knees when you were a boy? In spite of my scoldings and mockings, the good God knows that I love you as if you were my own son. I know that you are not wicked, as people say. In spite of your wild oats, your vagaries, your misunderstood genius, you are, after all, only a poor boy. All your sadness is due to the fact that you have merely attempted to scale heights beyond your strength. You are not indeed the great man that Gil Blas was, but, on the other hand, you are not entirely an 'enfant terrible.' Apropos of this, let me tell you a little story.

"Once upon a time I knew an excellent gentleman of

fine character, who lived on his estates in the capital of this province, and devoted himself to the tranquil life, fleeing from everything which might disturb his quiet and repose. He had long wished to marry, but kept putting it off, until he arrived at the age of fifty without having settled on any one. Overcome by idleness and gluttonous habits, he still was possessed of a deep sentimentality, a vein of romance, joined with a great timidity. One day he made up his mind to go on a voyage, and though he never passed the frontier, when he came back to his home town, he had great tales to tell of fabulous adventures and extravagant encounters, and as proof of this fact, he brought back in his trunk some strange novelties. Although they were nothing more wonderful than a fashionable hat, or an up-to-date suit, he nevertheless took great pride in them, walking up and down the streets of the town in these marvellous vestments, as though he were a conquering hero celebrating his triumph. And the whole town looked at him with awe and talked about what a wonderful appearance he made. The next time he went on a voyage, he would come back and repeat this performance, perhaps in some other way, this time bringing back a little dog of rare pedigree, or a Japanese cat, or a red parasol. And the townspeople watched with impatience for the return of the celebrated voyager, and would inquire with interest, 'I wonder what the good Don Cæsar will bring back this time?' And none of these good people could understand the terrible battles which were fought in the soul of the simple and candid Don Cæsar, the

internal drama of that kindly gentleman, for after all he was nothing but a timid soul, who really had to force himself to assume this rôle of the extravagant and the original, and to dress himself up in unusual garments, to put on the air of a tourist, of a 'Grand Señor,' to whom the people looked up with so much awe and reverence. And this very timidity was always the greatest at the moment when he sallied forth to meet the curious stares and the joking remarks of the townspeople, whence he always returned to shut himself up in his house, frightened and ashamed as a little child.

"And this sort of thing happens to everybody. We all of us once in a great while go on a journey, and return to disport ourselves in strange garments and unusual fashions, making believe that we are everything but what we really are; but most of us are so little versed in the art of deception that the most ignorant can see through it all, and realizing this, make fun of us and deride us. But the trouble with you is that you go on these journeys every day, a couple of times a day, and are posing all the time. You are just like this very respectable and peaceful man whom I have told you about, well worthy of his name and estate, and yet always profoundly unhappy."

And here Don Rodrigo broke into his raucous laugh, and with a really affectionate look at his nephew, bade him farewell; and as the youth hurried away homeward, he shook his head and said to himself:

"The French invasion, my dear, is not yet over, for the race of Tartarin of Tarascon has thrust its roots deep into the land of Don Quijote; and in our part of

the country the Quijotes have departed, and only the Tartarins are left with us."

On pondering over the ironies of his uncle, Pedro felt angry with himself that he had not made some stinging reply to the impertinent little story, when on suddenly rounding the corner, he ran into a funny little man who very nearly put his eye out with his umbrella. He was a fat little man, wearing a gray suit and red necktie, well past his youth, and given to talking loquaciously in a childish voice, with which he began to make profound apologies and excuses to Pedro for having collided with him; and he even offered to see him home under his umbrella, as he noted that Pedro had none. As Pedro could find no other way to get rid of him, they walked peaceably along together toward the house of Don Juan Manuel. The little man, who proved to be the sexton of the church, piqued Pedro's curiosity, for he was such a funny little personage, and displayed such a curious mixture of saintliness and cynicism, good heart and bad tongue.

"What's your name?" said Pedro. "Everybody speaks of you as Leli, but what is your real name?"

"In this town, where everybody is called either Barredas y Ceballos, Escalantes y Villas, Tagles, or Bustamentes y Calderones, I am proud of my simple name of Pérez."

"Pérez of what?"

"Pérez of nothing, Señor. Pérez y Pérez, if that makes it any plainer."

"Are you a native of Santillana?"

"I am not a native of any place."

"What!" exclaimed Pedro.

"I was born in the mountain, by the grace of God. My mother, God rest her, was a washerwoman from Bezana, and I was born one night when she was carrying home a basket of clothes on the road toward Torrelavega, and some peasants who lived near by carried us both off to that town. I was brought up in Santa Cruz de Benzana, like a dog without a master. My mother, who seemed ambitious to provide soldiers for the king, had twelve children, of which I was the twelfth, and you can imagine, dear sir, how we must have lived, poor as we were. My father, God rest him, was an Andalusian, as poor as a piper, and you know that there is nobody poorer than they; for in Cadiz they never teach anybody how to make money, but only how to spend it; like all Andalusians, he was good-looking, good-natured, and sang like a lark of Grenada, and as soon as he married my mother, he went to work gallantly to spend the few dollars that she had put by. And so there was nothing for it but for her to go to work again, while he did nothing but sing, and dance *jotas*,* and bowl on the village green. But as everything in this life comes to an end, my mother died of a stroke, whereupon my father immediately took himself off, leaving us children on the world. My older brothers went away to America, and they sent me to Santander to an uncle of mine who kept a little shop there, and he made me his messenger boy, for, as he very well said, I was so stupid and good-for-nothing that it wasn't worth while to send me to school; and as I wasn't much use in the shop, I finally found myself

*Jota—an Andalusian dance derived from the Moorish.

landed in the orphanage here at Santillana, and here the good Don Elías, who is indeed a saint, decided that I was indeed good for something, and that he would prove it. And that is the way I came to be the sexton of Santillana."

"Do you know, Leli," said Pedro, smiling, "that you interest me very much. I never knew that under your homespun cape there was hidden a person of so many gifts, and although I have spoken to you a good many times, I must say that never until now have I really known you."

"The reason is," replied Leli, sagaciously, "that people want you to be what they want you to be. Now some people believe that I am a fool, and then I, too, begin to believe so. Other people believe me wise, and then I am also wise. For after all, many fools become learned, and the learned as often turn to fools. A wise man once said to me that in every man there is three men—the first is what he believes himself to be, the second is what other people believe him, and the third is his real and true self."

"I see, my dear Leli," said Pedro, "that you are indeed a philosopher."

"God forbid it! I much prefer to be a sexton. As a matter of fact, I always inclined toward the church. If I had had wealth, I would to-day be the canon of the church of Santa Illana or chaplain of the monastery."

"Are you fond of the ladies?"

"No, sir, I am not!"

"Are you married?"

"I? God forbid it! After the example I saw in my own home I have had a horror of matrimony. I don't

like noise and quarrelling. I am afraid of women. All the holy Fathers have agreed that women are worse than the leprosy or smallpox."

"But your mother, according to what you say, was a saint," argued Pedro.

"Yes, sir, completely. My mother was a saint, and my father was a barbarian; and in spite of being a saint, my mother often had to club my father with a stick. He wouldn't work——"

"Are you happy, Leli?"

"Those who have made me believe that I am not a fool have injured me, because I am not entirely happy."

"You believe then that only fools are happy?"

"Who can doubt it? In order to prove whether a man is happy, one need only notice whether he sucks his finger. I don't suck my finger, and that is a proof that happiness is not entirely for me. It is only for people who haven't a shirt to their back."

"Well, my good Leli, you have several shirts, and even several cravats, very beautiful cravats."

"That is my vanity, sir. Cravats are my hobby. You are laughing? Well, I will confess to you that I change my cravat oftener than I do my shirt. Now I have heard that many gentlemen of the big cities do the same thing, and nobody calls them fools."

"You are indeed a genius. I believe that you are the very prince of sextons."

"That is according to the way the wind blows. When the wind blows from the south, my head is good-for-nothing, but when the northeast wind blows, I really have a great many ideas."

"Man alive, you must have been reading 'Hamlet,' but with you things happen the reverse from the Prince of Denmark. With you it is when the south wind blows that you cannot distinguish the heron from the falcon."

"Are you a lawyer, Don Pedro?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because you like to talk so that nobody will understand you."

"And is that the way the lawyers talk?"

"Yes, and also the priests and the doctors. Priests talk in Latin, because it is the language which they understand up in Heaven. The doctors talk in Greek, so that other people will not know that they do not know anything. And the lawyers talk gibberish, so as to prolong the law-suits and fill their own pockets. This is their business."

"I am afraid you are a backbiter, Leli."

"That's one of the penalties of being a sexton. My two vices are backbiting and cravats."

"Do you know that you resemble a gentleman more than you do a sexton?"

"No, sir, I haven't any of the attributes of a gentleman. I don't talk coarsely, I don't write badly, I don't have children behind the back of the church, I don't envy my equals, and I don't bother anybody with my troubles. In other words, I am not a gentleman, but only a despised village boy, glutted with beans and virtue."

Pedro had reached the door of his house, and standing in the vestibule he listened delightedly to the chatter of the sexton, who finished with:

"If I was a gentleman like you, I would be finer than the king in his court. Do you think that I would go and sell my liberty for a plate of lentils, and stick myself in this cloister? Do you know that people say—'Of what good to him have been Don Pedro's books and all his talent? To come here and shut himself up in this out-of-the-way hole, after having travelled all over the world? To perdition with books!' In truth, they say that learning is pernicious. Here you have at your service the son of Mari-Coba, who doesn't know how to read and hardly how to speak, and yet he went off to America, and only the other day he came back with so much money that he bought himself a palace in Torrelavega, and comes to see his mother in an automobile, and has given her the house in which she lives, and a gold chain, and a parrot who talks like a tea-pot. You must learn how to live, dear sir——"

"And who has given you permission," exclaimed Pedro, angrily, "to mix yourself up in my affairs, and to dare to compare me to an imbecile like the son of Mari-Coba, who is nothing but a blockhead!"

Leli immediately begged a thousand pardons, with such an air of mock humility, that Pedro realized that this fool, with the wisdom of a rogue, had been making fun of him all along, whereupon he unceremoniously thrust him out of the vestibule.

And laughing heartily, Leli picked his way along under his old umbrella, and Pedro entered the house pondering upon the fact that truths are bitter, even when uttered by fools.

CHAPTER IX

NOW, let us see," said Juliana, with gracious affection. "I want you to answer every question which I ask you. Sit down here beside me. And you, Silda, come here, too, and help me. I am going to see whether we have converted this heretic."

They were in Silda's room. Juliana seated herself with the gravity of a professor in the big chair, and Silda sank down on a little stool at the feet of her cousin. Pedro, seated beside the sewing table, with his head on his elbow on the table, smiled at her.

"Don't smile," said his charming mentor severely. "This is not a laughing matter. We are not playing. Now I am going to begin: Who do you believe made heaven and earth, water and flowers, and everything which we see?"

"That is a difficult question to answer, my dear cousin. Learned men have been asking the same question for centuries, and haven't yet decided on the proper answer."

"Is that so? Well, a child with a catechism in his hand knows that of which these learned ones are ignorant. Fine wise men they are, not to know that it was God! Well, do you not believe in another life?"

"I have my doubts, Liana. Science says——"

"Let us leave science in peace. Science talks nothing but nonsense."

"Woman! Well, to tell you the truth, I haven't much faith in science, either. With all this talk about science, we are still unhappy creatures."

"Am I to believe then," cried Juliana with astonishment, "that you do not believe in science, either? Well, then, will you please tell me what you believe in? The devil, perhaps?"

"No, not even in the devil."

"Then you do not believe absolutely in anything?"

"But why this great need to believe?"

"What! Why shouldn't we believe? If we don't believe, what is there to distinguish us from animals?"

"Very little."

"Many thanks, Mr. Poet."

"I wish to say——"

"Now you've put your foot in it, brother," said Silda, bursting into a great loud laugh.

"I wish to say," insisted Pedro, "that there are some people who do not feel the necessity of believing. Belief is a thing of the will. On the other hand, we all feel a necessity of feeling. Sentiment is a need of the heart. Belief is only a secondary matter. The principal thing is to feel, to love. Everything is according to the heart, as the holy Saint Teresa has said."

"You don't know what you're talking about," replied Juliana, gravely. "This is what has come of reading all those books which have done nothing but upset your understanding. Come over here, you twisted one, and tell me this. If you do not believe in

something, how is it going to be possible to love? Would it be possible to love God without believing in Him?"

"There are many ways of loving God, dear cousin. You can love God by loving His creatures. If love is of divine essence, to love anything is to draw near to divinity."

"What foolishness! For the soul it is not sufficient to love. It is necessary to believe. Do you not believe in the soul, either?"

"I do not believe that the soul is distinct from the body."

"Oh, unhappy one! If the soul were not distinct from the body, we indeed would be poor little animals, as you said before. But come here, man of God! Do you not feel within yourself something superior, something divine, something inexplicable, something supernatural, which urges you toward Heaven? Something resembling a flame, a perfume, a prayer? Where do you suppose pure loves go, the glances of the eyes, the sighs, the prayers, the devout thoughts, the sweet secrets of one's heart? Sometimes it happens to me that I think and feel such subtle things, things so delicate, so difficult to express in words, that they even make me suffer. Is it possible, I say to myself, that all of this is going to die with me?"

"And whither goes the flame of the candle when the candle is consumed? And the perfume of the flower when the flower fades?" replied Pedro with vehemence. "Leave me with my doubts, Juliana, leave me with my shadows. I do not know anything. I do not want to know anything. I am afraid of the truth, Why

seek it when she never wishes to show herself naked to our eyes? Doesn't everything in this world conceal itself beneath a lie? I don't wish to destroy your faith. If I did so, you would believe me the most infamous of men. Live happy with your sweet deception, and leave me with mine. Do not let us discuss, do not let us try to explain the ineffable. Feel! Feel! St. Teresa was right. Everything is in the heart. Do not talk to me of dogma! Do not talk to me of science! Talk to me of love, of sentiment, of tenderness, of the things which never lie! Or, better still, do not talk, do not talk of anything! Words deceive. They profane everything. Feel, feel! I want to pray, Juliana, but I want to pray mentally, with prayers that will be like romances without words, pure music of sentiment, melody of the soul! Oh, if I could only find some wonderful word into which to translate my sentiment! If sentiment could only communicate itself by a silent and sweet emanation, like the perfume of the violet! I would rather multiply the power of my lower senses, render more subtle my hands, more acute my smile, turning my body into a pulp of living flesh, intensify my nerves, in order to feel more, to suffer more, to love more, to suffer and feel in silence like the flowers! Is it not refined, that love of the greyhound, who sniffs the scent of his beloved master, vibrating with the odour as a harp which is played by the winds? Why does the refined soul draw back from these delicate avenues of scents? I am tired of those so-called intellectual senses, the sight and the hearing, which deceive us so greatly. Do you understand,

Juliana, the deep and spiritual life which could shut itself up in a human statue, without eyes, without ears, a great mystic flower where all the tumult of life and of thought was to be found in flavours and in touch! How greatly would burn such a soul, thus shut in in shadow and silence, eternally in touch with mystery, vibrating with every little cell of the skin like soft music, evaporating in every atom of air, melting like the Host on the palate! For the deepest love is that which trembles in the soul of man in silence and tears, and never finds its way into speech."

And on saying this, Pedro fell back upon his chair, panting as though exhausted by some great effort, his face pale, his eyes burning. It was evening, and the moonlight glimmered through the windows like a river of silver, and falling upon the face of Pedro, made it appear even paler, almost like a dead face, in which the eyes burned with a strange fire.

"What a beautiful night!" he said, pulling himself together and going over to the window. "Oh, if only life might be a beautiful moonlight night! Then indeed we could live a dreamy, soft existence. In place of this blue Heaven which we see, 'which is not Heaven and is not blue,' we would ever be looking into the profound abysses of mystery and the soft face of the moon, friend of all the sad. I have dreamed of a mystic garden, where souls without bodies wander over moonlit countrysides, adoring some star, and listening to the song of the nightingale; and my tired soul was a ray of moonlight, shining upon the waves of some serene backwater. I am afraid of the sun. Under its cruel reality

my sharpened sensations are like needles which penetrate my tingling words, and ideas pain me like wounds, and my sentiments wail within my breast like new-born infants. At night, on the other hand, under the light of the moon, all my tired sorrows sleep, and friendly shade refreshes my feelings and bathes me in a sweet well-being. I love the moon."

Juliana and Silda listened, silent and terrified, their eyes filled with tears. Pedro's lyric eloquence, his wild and enigmatic speech pierced the two women to the heart, and their thoughts went back to that poor, demented lady, who used to wander about the house in her mild lunacy, and felt that in the speech and look of her son was her very incarnation. Juliana regretted having been the cause of that fiery outburst. The chords of religion vibrated very deeply in this reprobate. It was a long time since she had seen Pedro so exalted, heard him speak so strangely. The simple soul of Juliana, urged by her zeal for proselytizing, drew her near to her cousin and enveloped him in the flame of her faith, which little by little was fascinating him. Some great force was uniting these two, keeping them together, entangling them in their very words; a carnal ardour, of which they themselves were unaware, also was linking them strongly, more strongly than any knot of love could do.

Pedro looked upon that slender form like that of a mediæval saint, which was almost without form, almost entirely spirit, entirely flame, dressed in the brown habit and encircled by the chord of the Franciscan, and beholding that pale and serious face, that slim and un-

dulating body, all his being and all his feeling trembled toward her. Juliana, without realizing the danger, also was letting herself fall into an earthly snare, bewitched for her part by the grave and tormented face, by the burning eyes, and by the beard like the Nazarene.

Leaning out of the window of the sun-room, Pedro breathed in the peace and freshness of that beautiful night. From the orchard arose a cloud of rich odours, and a fountain trilled and trickled below them. The countryside, bathed in the moonlight, stretched out in solemn and melancholy beauty. The soul of Santillana del Mar dispersed itself like a cloud of opium over the countryside, and gently soothed the soul.

"Come hither, Shulamite," said Pedro, beckoning Juliana toward the window. "Can you not hear the night, like an echo of the Song of Songs? Harken to the voice of the Shulamite, your sister, who is seeking her lover, whom she summons by the song of her lyre. Do you see that white form crossing the orchard, singing madrigals? That is the Shulamite, who is looking for the lord of her soul, who is seeking for him and does not find him, and is laying spells upon the daughters of Jerusalem, so that they will reveal to her where her love is hidden. The Shulamite is singing in the perfumed orchard. Listen to her lay."

And here Pedro intoned an exquisite paraphrase which he had composed upon that noble Song of Solomon, and the verses fell upon the night like the tinkle of crystal bells. Nature herself, bathed in the white sleep of the moon, seemed to be listening, charmed by that ancient chant of love.

"Are those verses yours?" inquired Juliana.

"Don't you remember? It is a rhapsody which I composed upon the Song of Songs long years ago, when, just as now, I sang to you in the moonlight. But who can do justice to that exquisite poem of the wise king, the great soul of that king who so well knew how to join love and wisdom, those two divine eyes of the spirit?"

The ancient spell of Israel had penetrated to the soul of Juliana. She looked out at the orchard, upon the harps of love, and to perceive in the shadow of the cypresses the white silhouette of the Loved One.

"You are a poet, Pedro, an unrecognized poet. I have also read the verses which you gave to Rosuca, and realizing how greatly you appreciate mystic poetry, it is hard for me to believe that you are an atheist, an unbeliever!"

"I am not an atheist, Juliana. Neither am I an unbeliever."

"But what are you then, dear cousin? Are you an angel, or a reprobate? Sometimes I seem to see in you, may God forgive me, the splendour of sanctity, and at others a riot of colour, violet, like a flame of sulphur. What are you? Tell me."

"I am a man who was born too late."

"Now you yourself don't know what you really are. Those books of yours have turned your head. I have never seen anybody who exhibited more contradictions than you do. You go to church, and yet you deny that you have faith. You decry religion, and at the same time you abhor science. You are capable of

crushing a human heart, and yet you draw aside in the roads and fields in order not to tread upon an ant."

"You are right, Juliana. I myself do not know myself."

"Turn your eyes to God. There still is time. Recover your faith."

"With a missionary like you, that is not so difficult. If the priests were only women instead of men, there would not be a man outside the church door. But since the pastors are all men, religion makes more proselytes among the women."

"Oh, you heretic, always with a joke upon your lips!"

"Your faith will save me, as Don Juan was saved by the piety of Doña Inez.

It was now late, and Juliana prepared to depart. Pedro offered to accompany her home.

"And I will enjoy on the way the exquisite spectacle of the moon over Santillana," he said. "Let us go to the Hill of Perfumes, and watch for the passing of the Shulamite in this white epiphany of the moon."

CHAPTER X

LIANA and Pedro went slowly along the narrow, deserted street, both lost in thought, and in the solemn silence of the night they could hear the music of their own blood vibrate within them; the powerful rhythm of their beating hearts. Although they knew it not, those two exalted temperaments, in each of which flourished the latent neuroses of their race, were embarking upon a road of mad love which neither could overcome.

And so they walked slowly and silently along, bathed in moonlight, like two phantoms. They reckoned not the hour: all notion of time had fallen away from them. On reaching the church, they paused a moment, overcome by the supreme beauty of the spectacle spread out before them; Santillana, dreaming in the moonlight, sparkled as though in the early dawn of day. The old houses, the towers, the stones, the escutcheons, the ancient pile of the abbey, bathed in that celestial white, in that luna inundation, assumed an exquisitely poetical and mysterious expression. Everything seemed mysterious and far away, as though revealed through a telescope; everything was white, soft, dim, vaporous, like a shimmering veil or a shifting cloud, producing an emotion at once æsthetic and religious, a delightful, poetic stupor. Over all hung a harmonious silence,

similar to a pause in a bar of music. The firmament, pure, diaphanous, clear, hung like a heavenly mantle above the earth, upon which that pure lamp, the moon, smiled down like the gracious face of a woman. The star-white trembling air was soft and warm, laving the hands and brow like the smooth waters of a lake, and the soft respiration of the night breathed as gently as the lightly heaving breast of a sleeping child. A distant star trembled in the sky, like a silver tear about to fall upon the earth, where all things, submerged in that silver flood, appeared as pure, as virginal, as innocent as though they had only just slipped out of the hands of God.

To the two who contemplated all this, entranced, it seemed as though they had become disincarnate, and were like two rays of light poised upon the earth. Both trembled with emotion, feeling within their inmost souls the whisper of half-revealed secrets, unworded thoughts, like the lyric soul of the countryside.

Pedro looked at Juliana, who stood mute, pensive, sad, like an angel of night, or a lily trembling in the moonlight. And a great pity surged over him, on seeing her so pale, so beautiful, so sad, like some ancient image—the image of that martyr, St. Illana, who had conquered the dragon; and on seeing her thus at his side, all white with the moon, all spirit, silent and sad, his soul was suddenly flooded with a great wave of love.

Juliana did not look at him; her black and ardent eyes were as though lost in the vague distances of a grave dream. And now the Shadow which was Pedro spoke to the Shadow which was Juliana; spoke with

vibrant accent, as though his lips drew forth from the depths of his soul the words which trembled upon them.

"What a wonderful feeling of peace this night gives one. It seems as though some kindly hand had touched my aching heart, and as though the ineffable communion of the moon had banished all my cares and anxieties."

His words trembled like unshed tears in the silence of the night.

"Maybe I have died, and my imprisoned soul, now released, is basking in immortal serenity. Is this reality, or is it a dream? Speak, Juliana. Tell me what you feel in this night, in which we two stray along in the white mystery of the moon, tell me. Is this a dream, or are we really living? But you weep. Those celestial eyes are soft with tears. It is true then. Since you are weeping, you must be living."

As though awakening from a trance, Juliana trembled and softly began to speak.

"Yes, I am weeping; weeping because of a pain which wounds me in the heart like a thorn. I fear, Pedro, that you are going to die in mortal sin: I who dreamed of leading you back to our holy faith. As St. Teresa once said, 'A little dove whispered into my heart—You who were nothing here on earth will be all things in Heaven; if you only wish it, you can be infused with the flame of a living love, which burns in the soul and finally leads it to Heaven. That Heaven above will be your heritage, and you can attain it by renouncing evil. God has promised it.' That messenger dove flew to me, and her divine voice fell upon my soul like a

command from Heaven. Ever since that time, Pedro, I have endeavoured to lure you to those ties where the flame of a living love is nourished and created. You did not wish to enter. You did not wish to hearken to my call. For you my prayers were a joke. To-night your words filled me with horror at their blasphemy. Can you understand my pain? Can you not understand it? You even dare to ask me why I weep."

"My love, Juliana! Santa Illana——"

"I shall die of grief if you are joking again."

"Joking, Juliana! If I am joking, let the heavens fall upon me. Dear one, if your pain is so great, if it is true that you weep because I do not believe, if indeed the Christian faith is the reward of your love, I swear to you, oh, my dear one, by all that I hold sacred, I swear to you that I will bow my head upon the altar, that I will wash away my sins with my tears, that with my own blood I will inscribe the image of the Cross above my sinful heart. I will pull out my miserable tongue; I will tear my eyes from their sockets, and even this wretched heart from its breast. I will do all this, if only in return for my sacrifice, my suffering, you will give me again the old love which once you bore me, the old passion which now has been resurrected in me with the flame of a living love, which burns here in my soul and threatens to consume me. O! Juliana! Let this love once more shine in your eyes, burn in your memory and your heart, in your body and your soul!"

The poor Liana stood trembling with emotion, pale as the image of death, while Pedro looked down upon

her with flaming eyes. About them the world seemed to hang in breathless silence, listening, listening.

"Do not speak of these dead loves. Speak only of the holy love of God, which never dies. We are now too old. Leave the past to sleep in its tomb. It is now dead. Think upon eternal life. Our souls will be united in Heaven, and not in the sad loves of this world. The only thing for us to look forward to is death. You must think about death."

"So long as a single spark of life flickers within me, so long as one drop of blood flows in my veins, it will burn with love of you, Juliana!"

"Stop! In God's name, stop, Pedro! Pray; hope and pray!"

Whereupon Pedro, as though inspired by the spell of her words, dropped upon his knees on the stones, and raising his eyes and his voice to Heaven cried:

"O God, give me peace! My captive soul, filled with past loves and dead hopes, wends its way toward the infinite night. I am in despair of life. I seek the bread of love and the quiet waters of repose. Have pity, O God! Give me, oh, give me that inward Grace, that peace which will sweep away the sharpness from my road on this last, sad journey of my life!"

This filmy veil of prayer wafted its way to those calm heavens like a white carrier pigeon flying upward in the moonlight. Then Liana whispered softly:

"Hearken, oh, my God, to this prayer of a suffering soul! Let it flourish in thy orchard of love and piety like a sheaf of lilies!"

It was now very late; and the moon, suspended like a

nimbus above the tower of the silent old abbey, was beginning to sink. In the distance a cock crowed, and Juliana, startled, exclaimed:

"What madness, Pedro, what madness! It is past midnight. My father is expecting me——"

"But the night is so beautiful."

"My poor old father is expecting me."

"The night is so clear. On such nights as these it is sweet to lie awake. It is like a delicious dream to wander through the streets of Santillana in the moonlight, reciting prayers and weeping love passages. Behold, Juliana, behold that symbolic eagle, emblazoned upon the shield of your forefathers, who dies, pierced by an arrow. He dies of love, just like my own soul. A worthy death, says the old motto, makes the whole life worthy. How beautiful it would be to die for love!"

"For divine love! For human love, Pedro, is a delusion."

"There is no other love than love. Love is one. All love is one."

"There is no love except in God. All other love is misery and sorrow, the flower of a day. If you only could feel as I do. If only this flame of a living love would enter into your heart. What an ineffable pleasure! What eternal bliss! When in my hours of sorrow I draw near to those blessed waters, what a delight, what a gift for the soul, what an exalted happiness! It is vain to dream of caresses, of wordly pleasures, of fine raiment. The soft breeze of mornings in May, the kisses and the wings of the angels of God are the dreams of my heart and soul. The kindly eyes which

look down upon me from Heaven, and a soft, sweet voice like the voice of a harp comes to my ears murmuring: The soul is like a captive bird who, when the doors of his cage are opened, soars carolling into the heavens above him. A mixture of ice and fire, sweetness and bitterness, anguish and joy, pains the heart, and the blood flows through the veins like tepid water. Afterward, it is as though one were beholding the sun at his height in the zenith, a flame of light, an ardent fire which leaps and consumes; and afterward an anguish, an agony, a death by love."

And Pedro, as he listened to this impassioned outburst and beheld the countenance of Juliana flaming with that ardent and superhuman passion, also flamed and burned with a passion that was not superhuman.

"Love, oh, my love!" he exclaimed. "Return once more to the fold where once you rested with me! Why seek in the icy sepulchre or in the grave beyond the object for your devotion? Die? Never, my love! Live! Oh, live—with me! Why do you seek to soar to the heights above, and abandon the love of man? God has commanded you to love. God does not wish you to mortify your flesh, to torment the beautiful body which he bestowed upon you, a gift for health and love. Return to your original heritage, poor lonely soul! Return to my arms where love awaits you! The flame of a living love is here within my breast. The flame of a human love! Oh, Shulamite! My Shulamite!" And seizing the hands of Juliana, he crushed them within his own, hearing in the silence of the night the murmur of the epithalamium.

"Liana! Awake and tell me that you love me! Tell me that never again shall we be parted! Juliana, I adore you! If you wish to, we shall spend our life together in prayer; we will pray every night and every morning. We will pray for our love, pray for our happiness, and some day we will pray side by side within our sepulchres in the abbey of our ancient Santillana!"

And now they had reached Liana's silent home. Under a silver quilt of moonlight slept the dreaming orchard, the gentle murmur of its rustling leaves lispings like a child in his sleep. Juliana drew back, sobbing.

"Oh, leave me, leave me!" she cried. "Go away!"

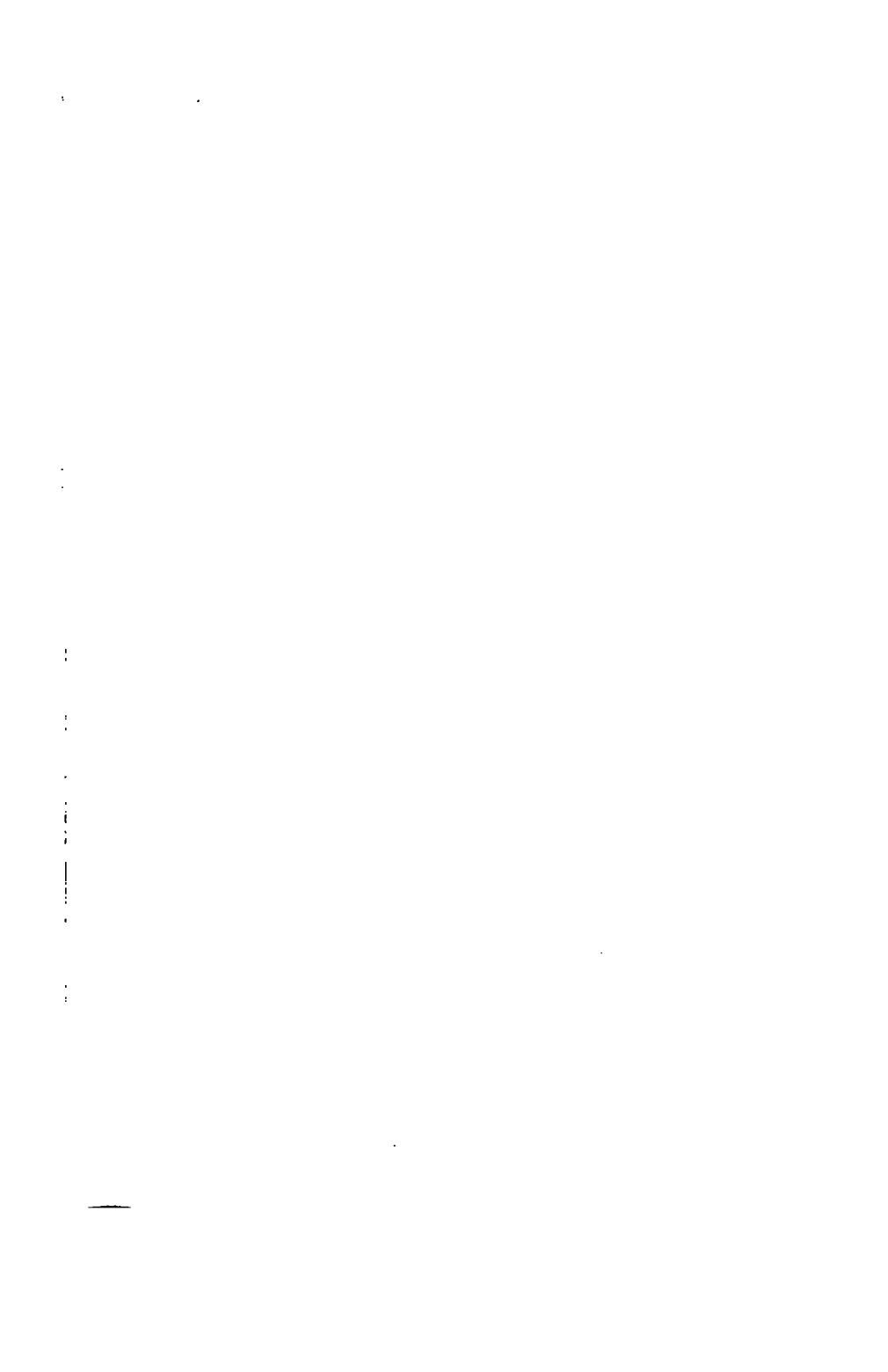
But Pedro did not go. Instead, he pleaded still more eloquently, his ardent phrases pouring from his trembling lips like the flood of an unchecked cataract. She put out her little white hands to push him away, only to find them seized in both of his, while he wound his arm about her and drew her close to him, bent back her head, and kissed her wildly.

In a voice that was like the bleat of a wounded lamb she whispered—"Go, Pedro, go! For the love of God, go!" But another kiss fell upon her mouth and held her lips.

The sign had fallen. Santa Illana, who in these dreams had arisen from the sepulchre, bearing the halter in her hand, fell at the feet of the dragon, overcome. The dream had come true. Santa Illana, who had dreamed of conquering her enemy, Santa Illana, no longer a saint, but only a poor, sinful woman!

If indeed love be a sin, then may God forgive her.

THE FIFTH JOURNEY
THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL



CHAPTER I

FATHER WINTER, that lean pantaloon of the white hair and the snowy beard, had arrived; had arrived, accompanied by his cortège of clouds and showers, ashy dawns, dreadful nights, and pale and sunless days; a solemn silence also accompanied him, for over his carpet of snow the lazy, groaning carts passed softly. The cows are shut in their barns, and the white-powdered peasants look like ghosts wandering along the mute, crystal-covered countrysides. The snow has completely blocked the road to the mountain, and the doors of the old manor-house open only when urged by the blows of some wanderer half dead with cold and fatigue, for upon the ruins of the past there still lives in that great house the old generous Castilian hospitality.

Do you not hear the sound of the wind, the south wind, which whistles and roars, echoing in the glen like a shepherd who blows his horn to summon his scattered flock? Nestled in her wintry sleep at the foot of the abbey, Santillana dreams gravely, far from the beaten track. The heavens weep without ceasing, and the clouds hang heavy above the black roofs of the village. The atmosphere is dense, heavy, oppressive, and the humid breath of the earth stifles the lungs and stiffens the bones like a sigh from a tomb. The trees in the

orchard, bare-limbed and drooping, resemble human skeletons, with their nude and rigid arms stretched up to a pitying sky in silent supplication. The north wind and the rain implacably lash the black-and-green fronts of the houses, corrode the shields and escutcheons, call at the sealed-up doors, rattle the closed shutters, whistle in the chimneys, and penetrating everywhere, filter through the beams and rafters into the abandoned rooms which leaking and dripping count the hours with grave and sorrowful monotony, like the tick-tack of a pendulum. And in the distance the bells of the abbey toll and toll, softly, like the lamenting of souls in pain.

What has become of the burning days of the summer, when the rich foliage of chestnut and oak trees made a great display in the smiling valleys; when the flowery countryside and the enervating perfume of new-mown hay filled the warm air with their exquisite emanations; when the soft breeze undulated the green mantle of the corn-fields, like the waves of the sea; when the hidden swallows made their nests in palaces and manor-house, whence they flew out to poise themselves upon the eagles and chimeras of their blazonry; when the rattle of the tamborils called gay youth to dance and fair, and the songs of the country people accompanied the click of glasses as the Chacoli ran red, and all hearts were filled with happiness?

But now Father Winter had arrived. Through the ice-encrusted crystals of our windows we watched him come, descending from the mountains with his pilgrim staff, his cloak of snow, his white beard, his great round

eyes, as gray as turbid water. And as he passed, the trees groaned and trembled, the fountains left off their dancing, while the heavens wept and men closed their doors, birds huddled into their nests, and the snow fell and mantled the earth.

Now Santillana seems more dead than ever. It looks as though her few inhabitants, knights and country people, have deserted her forever. The crippled old houses, moss-covered and damp, manifest all the hideousness and the sadness of unburied human corpses. A strange shadow, a kind of stupor, hovers over the village. The decrepit locked doors, the frowning balconies, the decayed old windows, the arches and skylights, all closed with a silence like that of eternity, with an expression like that of death, as though many centuries had passed without their having been opened to the light. One does not see a single human face. One does not hear the sound of a single voice, nor the echo of footsteps; not even the bark of a dog, nor the lowing of a cow. All is solitude, great solitude, weeping without sighs, silent tears, sorrow without words, like the abandonment of death.

And the snow falls, falls softly; and in the silence of the abandoned rooms sounds the perpetual drip, drip—counting the hours, the long hours, the sad hours, the hours that drag slowly, like the beads of a rosary of Eternity.

CHAPTER II

ROSUCA is dead. Didn't you know? I have looked upon Rosuca, a poor Rosuca, a pale Rosuca, a still Rosuca, Rosuca with her mocking green eyes closed, her laughing red lips pallid and still. Rosuca dressed in her best, laid out upon her little white bed, where she had dreamed so many rose-coloured dreams of chaste and innocent love. They placed a sheaf of lilies in her hands; they lit a row of candles at her head; and on her quiet breast they laid a crucifix; and then they all knelt down and prayed, prayed for the soul of Rosuca.

Early one morning her funeral passed beneath my balcony through the streets of the dead Santillana. It was raining lightly, a fine and penetrating rain, like little icy needles, and through the rain slow-pacing horses drew a little white hearse, behind which walked the bowed form of Don Elías, sobs muffling the chant of his prayers; and behind him a solemn procession of black-robed villagers; weeping softly they marched, weeping as softly and as silently as the rain which dropped the icy tears of its wintry grief upon that sad little cortège, whose grief was silent, reserved, resigned, like the grief of cloisters and monasteries. For this remote community, in its physical isolation, had acquired also a mental and spiritual isolation; their senti-

ments took on a solemn reserve almost akin to modesty. The calm wave of Christian piety smoothed their brows and hushed their griefs. Even the mother of Rosuca, to whom she had been the apple of her eye, quieted after her first sobs, and fell into a silent stupor of inarticulate grief; while her eyes and her heart were bathed in tears, while she still wept as though the fountains of her grief would never dry up, she wept in silence, quiet tears, serene tears; it was a grief without cries or screams, without tearing of hair nor sound of wailing; an intense, eternal, incurable grief; a grief which would terminate only in death, in the peace and repose of the sepulchre.

Rosuca is dead! The open grave yawns for her lovely form, that beautiful body so full of life, so eagerly awaiting love and happiness, like the budding flowers of May, like the early fruit of an opulent vine. Why should the icy hand of death have touched that innocent brow, those gentle eyes smiling with love, those ruddy lips brimming with kisses unbestowed? Oh, implacable Nature, mother indifferent and cruel! Can you not content yourself with the tired and outworn, with sad hearts, impure and sick bodies? But no, you are an implacable executioner of youthful hope, a blind, fateful enemy of youth, of happiness, and of life.

Rosuca is dead! What was it killed Rosuca? Did she perhaps die of love? The doctor said it was a malignant fever. But what matter now whether 'twas fever or love, for Rosuca is dead!

They say that in her delirium her mother, bending close to catch the words of her raving, clasped her hands and lifted her eyes, exclaiming between her sobs:

“O God, this child is a saint! She dies, quoting from Saint Teresa!”

For those cracked and fever-parched lips at the behest of a fever-crazed brain murmured again and again:

“This flame of a living love, this divine torment that wounds me, holds my soul captive. Oh, how long is the road for the poor, tired pilgrim! I die because I cannot die! This flame of a living love——”

CHAPTER III

WHAT a tumult there issued from the organ of the church! How eloquently it sang, groaned, sobbed, and sighed! The faithful, kneeling below in the shadow of the temple, felt as though a wind of madness were passing through the sonorous tubes of the instrument; never before had they listened to such discordant harmony; to such intense and profound and vibrant sorrow, such pathetic desperation.

It was like the improvisation of some mourning genius, without rhythm, rule, nor proportion, breaking all laws of music, disregarding all principles, rushing forward like an uncurbed horse. It was an impetuous, fiery, wailing improvisation, which rumbled in a great wave of sound throughout the trembling edifice, and engulfed the images, the sepulchres, the columns, the confessionals, the lamps and candles upon the Altar, and even the very Altar itself. It sounded as though the rebellious Angel had possessed himself of the organ and set it to expressing in terrible shrieks and screams the song of the lost souls, all their infinite passion, their hates and terrors, their prayers and blasphemies, in a barbarous symphony of universal and eternal sorrow; a savage concerto of human tragedy, weeping and sobbing in the night under an indifferent Heaven, finally

dying away in a last sigh of anguish. For a moment there was a pause, a pause of sweet silence, and then the organ vibrated again, and again there were broken harmonies and strange discords, which slowly resolved themselves into a sweet and tender melody, one of those lovely madrigals of Palestrina. And then, as though angel voices were chanting a sublime oratorio, there came a great burst of harmony, a rich and sonorous Magnificat, ending in a glorious Hallelujah. It seemed as though the soul of Handl were palpitating in that great hosanna, which soon broke off, and again there came a series of discords, barbarous diapasons, like a grotesque burlesque of music. And just as Don Elías, startled and indignant, raised his voice from the altar to rebuke that mad playing, the organist again broke into a melody, an exquisite chant, that sublime andante from the Seventh Symphony of Beethoven. The almost superhuman grief of that noble funeral march filled the temple; the praying multitude wept, while the voice of the organ slowly died away, died into rumbling sighs; and then there arose from the organ loft the sound of a human voice, a hoarse and broken voice, which began to sing with strange rhythms an ancient Latin hymn:

Dormi, fili, dormi! Mater

Cantat unigenito:

Dormi, puer dormi! Pater

Nato clamat parvulo

Mille, mille, millies.

Dormi nate, mi mellite!

Dormi, plene saccharo!

Dormi, vita, meae vitae . . .

And at this there came a great hoarse rumble from the organ, and a shrill and cackling laugh from the Voice. The congregation rose in terror and rushed from the church, while Don Elías dashed up the stairs to the organ loft. There he found Luisito Calderon, his hands clenched, his face distorted as though in a delirium, his whole body broken and shaken with sobs.

CHAPTER IV

JULIANA and Pedro had married. Overcome by that night of madness, that brutal revelation of love, she thought at first that she would die. Her simple and ardent soul, a pure flower of sacrifice, had never imagined that she could reach this point in her Calvary. When she realized the depth of the abyss which had opened before her feet, her whole spirit trembled. An impure stain had fallen upon her home! A blot had soiled her ancient race of saintly women and noble knights; and at the thought of this shame and remorse rankled within her heart. Lucifer, luring her by the decoy of an earthly love disguised as one heavenly had overcome her, summoning to her doors not the love of God, but the love of man, fascinating, diabolic, stronger than death and deeper than the inferno! She, unhappy one, she, her miserable self, had fanned this flame, had nourished and quickened this fire! She unwittingly had drawn near to that wave of the carnal, finally to sink into its depths, lured by the fascination of sinful man; and without defence, she had capitulated to the enemy!

Poor Juliana, accustomed only to mortification of the flesh, and sorrowful penances for trifling little sins, the simplest indulgences of the flesh, urged by her mystic piety, yearning to rescue a human heart, to

gain a soul for God, she herself had fallen into the snares of the enemy. What knew she of the secrets of the soul, the lures of the heart, the impulses of the treacherous senses? She was trying to save a soul; instead she had lost herself.

Why had not somebody warned her, advised her? Father Elías himself had only thrust her further into the arms of Pedro by aiding and abetting her zeal for proselytizing.

"Why, oh, why, dear God, do you let the devil dog the footsteps of those who are only seeking to do good? Why, dear Father, do you permit sin to disguise himself in the vestments of virtue?"

Thus prayed Juliana, and a Voice from on high seemed to answer:

"You must learn this, poor sinner: Virtue has need to be wise, and not stupid and simple. Have you not heard many times from the Altar: 'Be as simple as the dove, but as wise as the serpent.' Prudence is the shield of virtue."

But how was she going to understand such subtleties? How was she to know that the real object of her pious mission had not been the conversion of the sinner, but the sinner himself; that she had been attracted, not by a soul to be saved, but by the fascination of a beautiful melancholy, two mournful eyes, and the beard of the Nazarene? Horrified by these thoughts, she hurried to the confessional, weeping and begging counsel from the good saint who so gently listened. The kindly Don Elías smiled his kindly smile, and gave her his blessing and his counsel. The result being that in a

short time Juliana and Pedro were united in the sight of man as already they were united in the sight of God and their own conscience.

They went to live in her house, where she might continue her care of Don Fernando; and Don Juan Manuel and Silda were once more left alone; while all the world marvelled that the strange and capricious heir of the Ceballos had at last decided to settle down to the humdrum life of a country gentleman.

It seemed as though that, with their marriage, the Odyssey of these two souls had come to an end; for the love of Pedro and Juliana promised to be a serene and happy love, full of tenderness; and while occasionally shadowed by the melancholy of autumn, still glowing with a little of the sweetness and freshness of dawn. And Pedro, bathing his heart in that soft wave of tender affection, basking his tired soul in the light of that lovely wife, believed for a little while that for him at last happiness was to be possible.

CHAPTER V

AND then one day—many days had passed before this happened—the happy dream was shattered. Pedro's insatiable soul, which so soon tired of everything, even of love and poetry, awoke to the sad truth. The smooth monotony of that calm, domestic love, the sweet, accustomed nearness of his wife, began to bore him, irritate him, oppress him. And later they distressed him, angered him, sometimes infuriated him.

He no longer felt for poor Juliana that mixture of poetry and dreaminess which once had so tortured and beguiled him. Now as he looked at her, thin and aging, she seemed like the image of human fatigue. Gone was that look of purity and saintliness which formerly had illumined her. As he watched her sleeping, her pale cheeks somewhat hollow, her pale lips thin and contracted, her hair dishevelled, her form withered, she seemed the sad wreck of all that had meant life and love. He felt a sudden loathing, a disgust, and quickly arose and left her, angering to look longer at that spent form with withered flesh which only a little while ago had quickened his heart and his pulses. And yet to the depths of his soul he suffered and reproached himself for the wrong he was doing this poor woman. He had ceased to love her, and yet he felt he must try to deceive her, that he must try to assume love, try to

treat her gently so that she might never realize the truth, the cruel, cruel truth. But alas, he soon came to know that love is something which admits of no pretence. Love admits of no trappings or disguise. One cannot doubt love. And hating and despising the bonds and shackles, almost hating and despising his once-beloved, Pedro soon came to hate and despise himself. He realized his perfidy to that sweet woman. He had made her believe in the sincerity of his devotion, and now, in the same depths of his heart, he repudiated her. This was indeed a crime.

But if he had deceived her he had also deceived himself. This complex, extravagant man, more accustomed to live within than without, had found at last that it was impossible for him to face true realities; impossible to accustom himself to method and regularity of action to the simple truths of life. For him existence was a perpetual falsehood, a constant artifice. And his vague visions and desires could never come to anything in this world. Conceived in the mind, when he tried to bring them forth into actual reality, he was overcome by the tedium of all things living and possessed, and the strange dualism of dreams jumbled with reality.

During his wandering life far from his home and his people he had concentrated all his early romanticism upon the image of Juliana. She became a symbol of his native village, his home, his youthful affections, his melancholy, and his remembrance. Thus poetizing about her he had in turn falsified his vision, had drawn her out of reality and converted her into a dream, a

symbol. And now having married her, having descended with her into the brutal reality of life, this man who was unable to accept reality saw his dream dissipated, his image broken. And with this disillusionment he found himself completely disenchanted and his soul overcome by the sense of the utter futility of things.

And now his old mania for analysis cruelly proceeded to complete his disillusionment. He found his wife countryfied and vulgar, incapable of understanding, sunk in religious fanaticism, like an old village woman, this poor lady of the people simple and crude, more like a peasant than a noblewoman. In this cruel mood he failed to remember the virtues of that saintly woman. He only knew that he was tired of her, chained to her, enslaved to her. And now his unhealthy pride revolted at his subordinate position in that house, dependent as he was upon Don Fernando to whom he owed the bread which he ate. And now Pedro had come to arrive at the point where he was humiliated by even the kindness with which the noble and unfortunate old gentleman treated him.

He believed that he had kept these terrible struggles well within himself, but womanly intuition and the eyes of love penetrated beneath the surface. Juliana divined much, and guessed still more than she divined. She realized that she no longer was loved. And the realization caused her intense suffering, a silent suffering, a saintly suffering; for she bowed to this blow and accepted it as a divine punishment for her sins.

CHAPTER VI

EVERY day intensified this grave and silent conflict. It was like a quiet divorce of souls, a frigid hostility that separated those two beings who have been united at the altar. Juliana, shut in a grave dignity, suffered silently, while Pedro became daily more capricious and violently rebelling at all restraint. He also began to decline in health, and became full of strange maladies some of them real, many of them imagined—but as usual with him the imagined more real than the real. And at this destruction of his health, this downfall of his life, he became full of bitterness and desperation. After so many years to find himself living in this dead town wedded but without love, living in dependence, broken in health, melancholy in mind, hating everyone and himself most of all. What use had he made of his talent, that talent of which he had once been so proud? He was not worth as much as those simple country people who did their duty in peace and the grace of God. What a contrast between this sick and unhappy soul and that fine old race of Hidalgos of Santillana, who had lived so nobly, so piously, so continently, so serenely. But it was too late to go back, too late to retrace his steps. Nothing remained for him now but to resign himself to his fate, to die! For he had a strange pre-

sentiment that death lingered not far from him. He realized that he was a prey to that scourge of his family, neurosis, which his own youthful wildness and indiscretions had intensified. And now like a covey of dark butterflies a black flock of disorders hovered about him.

Thenceforward the fear of death came like a blight over his spirit. And thoughts of the great unknown beyond made him to shudder and grow sick at heart. To die! To die when life was just maturing. To die at a time when other more happy men are just gathering in their well-earned laurels. To die when other serene souls look happily out upon calm and joyful horizons.

To die! Instead of resigning himself he became furious, and with his mounting rages drove all happiness from that once-peaceful household.

One day all his violence concentrated itself upon Juliana. It seemed that of a sudden the last pretence of love fell away from him, and in its place came hate—a wicked, violent hate which, surging within him, overflowed in a turn of horrible words. Completely beside himself he stormed at that pale saint until white and trembling with the outraged pride of the Spanish noblewoman, she quietly, silently pointed to the door; and Pedro, overcome by remorse, desperately flung himself out of the house, vowing never to return.

As the door closed behind him he felt as though the lid of a tomb had closed upon his heart.

CHAPTER VII

IT IS raining, raining unceasingly, as though all of the heaven were washing itself away.

Santilanna was drenched, silent, deserted, inundated; the fields under the monotonous gray sky were desolate, inert, stirred by a deathly wind. The distant mountains were wrapped in clouds which also enveloped the roofs of the houses, looking as though the heavens had fallen as in some pre-historic cataclysm. Earth and sky were of the same turbid grayish colour through which struggled a little ashy light.

Pedro paused for a moment in his flight, drenched to the skin. He could barely make out the dim cluster of houses in the valley beneath him which was Santilanna, bathed in clouds and rain. He looked upon the towers, the palaces, the dark old houses with a feeling of great pity for that abandoned town drenched in heavy rain, slowly crumbling into decay, turning to dust and ashes. The gray villa before him was like a sad symbol of the frailty of things; never had the eternal thought of death been written more pronouncedly upon the proud dwellings of man.

The generations who had made them, who had built them with their hands, decorated them with their art, emblazoned them with their shields and escutcheons, bathed them with their blood and tears. Did they not

still live with them in their sober interiors, their ancient façades, their crumbling escutcheons? What poetry and significance envelops the houses of man—those human monuments where generations are born, live, and die, each one leaving there something of his own personality, his speech, his features, even the timbre of his voice.

Whenever Pedro looked at the villa where he was born he seemed to perceive the symbol of his own life and destiny. Great and famous in its origin, bent beneath the weight of its blazonry, overlaid with the legendary aura of a glorious past, all was now sadness and decay, ruins and tears. And the ruin of the villa and the ruin of the man were to him equally pitiful.

Pedro now came upon an old by-path of the mountain as sad and as sharp as the road to Calvary, and he stood there perplexed for a moment. Whither was it going, that abandoned path, under the cruel lash of the rain, across the inhospitable mountain, without sign of human habitation, wandering like a poor, crazed creature?

He perceived in it his own wandering. The world appeared to be a vast cemetery, a theatre of desolation and wild beasts, a country through which had passed a deadly wind. Above were clouds and shadows, below the rain drenched the valley. And he, sad and alone, seated himself beneath the cruel skies trembling with cold and fear. And as he looked down upon the village below him and realized that he must return to that place of sorrow where he was dying of tedium and desperation, he felt as though he must once more flee as he had done in his youth, must escape from that

prison, must again set out upon the road of the world and die far away, very far away, where no one would see him, where no one would know him, where the secrets of his sorrows and his sins would be buried forever. Behind him he saw the shadowy palace of his wife, with its ancient glories crumbling and resembling a heavy Bastille. He looked with hatred upon the house where he was born, and where he realized that he soon was to die alone and forgotten without happiness or glory, like a wounded animal. And thus his emotions ran the gamut, and he passed from compassion to hatred, from tenderness to sorrow, from rebellion to anguish.

But whither should he go, where was he to turn to find refuge? For him there was no refuge but in death. He would not go further. He would stretch himself upon the ground, submerge himself in the frigid downpour and there die, die alone. And seating himself upon the trunk of a fallen tree he dropped his face into his hands and cried the sobbing cry of anguished childhood: "Mother, oh, Mother."

And then, as though that tender mother guided him, his stumbling feet again turned to the path, and like one in a dream he took his way toward home.

As one dreaming he walked, but in his dream he still suffered, still felt. At first he was overcome by the thought of his own cowardice, his weakness, his wickedness, but this soon turned to a savage rancour toward everything, his father, his wife, his fate, life, the world, humanity. And then came the reaction from this wild hatred. The poor heart was overcome by thoughts of the Infinite. Charity descended upon him, a super-

human love which seemed to rise magically upon the ruins of his wretched soul. He still felt the great sadness of living, but he also felt sorrow and sadness for those objects of his former hatred: they, too, were human like he, they felt, loved, hated, endured just as he was doing; like himself they were chained, imprisoned; like himself they wept and sighed, sinned and repented. He suddenly felt a strange desire to embrace these simple forms with the arms of love, and to cover them with prayers and blessings; to pray for everyone; for them, for his children, and his children's children through all the coming generations.

And Pedro dropped upon his knees in the sadness of the evening and prayed aloud.

CHAPTER VIII

PEDRO descended to the village, overcome by an inexplicable anguish, and walking like a drunken man, his ears ringing, his skin pricking, and his heart beating so violently that it seemed as though it would leap from his breast. He was shaking with terror; a few minutes ago he had been wishing for death; and now the fear of death which had descended upon him overcame him with fright and horror. He was afraid that he might die suddenly in that solitude, in the sadness of the dawn, like a sick animal who falls in his tracks, far from aid. A grave presentiment shadowed his soul: he had been ailing for many years; his worn-out mechanism might stop forever at any moment, and the terror of the unknown, the irremediable, the irrevocable, made his head swim. His panic increasing, he hastened his steps and lurched through the streets of Santillana, pale, tearful, his hands pressed over his heart, as though fearful that that frail pendulum of life might soon burst. He reached the church, and fear brought back to him his ancient faith and urged him to pray, to implore God to spare his threatened life. He entered the temple and sinking upon his knees began to pray ardently, and the petition drawn from his inmost soul calmed him somewhat.

He rose to his feet and was about to go out when a

shadow, which seemed to have detached itself from the ancient walls, fell across his path.

"May God be with you, Señor Don Pedro," said the shadow, the voice sounding as though it came from the depths of the tombs about.

"Who is that?" exclaimed Pedro.

"It is I, Leli. Do you not know me, Don Pedro?" And at this the figure of the sexton detached itself from the shadows and stood forth in the soft light.

"Why, hello!" cried Pedro, recovering himself. "What the devil are you doing hiding yourself away here like a ghost from the other world? You looked as though you were rising out of the tomb of Doña Fronilda."

"And I could say the same thing to you. What are you doing here in the church, Don Pedro, at such an ungodly hour? And look at you, covered with dust and drenched to your skin! Where have you been to get yourself so wet? You'll be lucky if you don't catch your death."

"Oh, shut up, you fool, and let me alone!" replied Pedro, little relishing these personal remarks.

"Well, sir, you'd better be off now, because I am going to close the church."

"No, I am not going. I want to go into the cloister. Open the door."

"Well, may God help me! At this hour it suddenly occurs to Don Pedro that he wants to go into the cloister."

"Don't answer me back. Open the door."

"You must be crazy, Don Pedro. Don't you see

that it's raining? What are you going to do in the cloister at this time of night?"

"Give me the key and take yourself out of here."

"Indeed I will not, sir. Both of us will go or neither of us. May God help you! I have a feeling about my heart as though something was going to happen."

"Stop your croaking and open the door."

He flung open the ancient portal, and a strange odour of dampness flowed out through it. The cloister looked a kind of greenish-black in the half-light, the stones dripping with dampness which fell from the arches upon the grass beneath, the whole place reeking with a penetrating odour of unhealthful humidity. The rain had ceased, and great plumed clouds hung over the black roofs, menacing a new downpour; the dark and wintry sky augmenting the sad aspect of that mansion of the dead.

Leli, still further overcome by the mad capriciousness which had brought him into the cloister on such a day and at such an hour, began calling on all the saints in the decalogue, and turning to Pedro cried in consternation:

"See here, sir, it really isn't prudent for a Christian to walk about here when God commands His creatures to take refuge in the warmth and dryness of the home. Let us go, for God's sake, let us go and leave this place to the dead who belong here! Come over to my house, if you don't want to return to your own, and I will dry you and warm you and give you a good glassful of Chacolí. I entreat you, sir, don't carry this madness any further, and come to your senses, if not for your own sake, for

mine, because my teeth are rattling with fear and with cold."

"Will you be quiet, you miserable creature?" exclaimed Pedro, stooping down to pick up a skull which he held triumphantly aloft. "Will you be quiet and not disturb the sacred sadness of this cemetery with your foolish discourses! What do you know of the grave mystery of death? Go along home if you want to, and leave me in this asylum of tired souls. What do you know about such things? Behold, I am Prince Hamlet! Do you not hear? I am Prince Hamlet soliloquizing on death. 'To sleep; to sleep, perhaps to dream.' Oh, tell me, thou vacant skull, tell me thy secret, thou rotting abode, where once great reason held her sway! Tell me what has become of the soul which once animated thee? Whither has gone the little world of thine ideas, thy sentiments, thy passions? Tell me, where does love go when love is done? And where goes that little light which we call the human soul, when the body falls into the sepulchre? Tell me, where is truth, which we all seek so arduously? Tell me, what is truth, what is love, what is glory, what is happiness? What do you say of these things, oh, thou laughing skull, rotting relic of that unknown man who once bore thee upon his shoulders? And you, oh, miserable good-for-nothing little sexton, what have you got to say about all this? What do you think of that to which we both are going to come, you and I and everyone who has ever been born?"

"Now, look here, Don Pedro, it really isn't Christian to make fun of death this way, nor to walk about with

skulls in your hand, as though they were pebbles from the brook. And let me tell you this, I am not a miserable creature, as you say. I am not a good-for-nothing sexton, but a well-intentioned young man, who begs you on his knees, in the name of all that you love best in the world, to get out of this awful place."

"Tell me, O, Nature," proceeded Pedro, as though he had not heard the little sexton, "tell me, you insatiable devourer of life and tears, are you indeed possessed of a heart, or are you an implacable mother, a bad mother who devours her own children? Are you the sphinx who never reveals her secret? Why this eternal labour of life? Why this concert of worlds destined to wander like black shadows in the deep abyss of nothingness? Is this some great divinity, who amuses himself playing with dead stars, as gravediggers play with grinning skulls?"

On hearing these words poor Leli was overcome with consternation, believing that the gentleman who talked so wildly had completely lost his reason, and he vainly urged Pedro to leave the cloister and accompany him to his house to drink a glass of Chacolí and warm himself.

"In the name of God," he said, almost weeping, "listen to me and leave off this foolishness. Now think for yourself, sir, isn't it foolishness to walk about asking questions of a skull? Do you not know that it was in this way that your friend the organist began, and now he is as crazy as a loon? Don't you know that?"

"Death," replied Pedro, interrupting him, unheeding.

"Can death be the iron key which opens to us the portals of truth? Could I, by destroying my own heart, tear from Heaven her secret? But suppose death is not eternal truth, but only eternal shadow, and after dying nature turns around and opens before us again the abysses of conjecture and longing? Tell me thou, oh, skull, thou grinning and horrible mixture of phosphorus and lime, tell me, mirror of my own life, caricature of my own self, my sister, what were you? Who were you, broken sanctuary of a soul? Were you perhaps some hidalgo of these Asturias, a friend or comrade perhaps of the famous marquis, or were you an archbishop or an abbot, like Juan Ruiz y de los Berceo, fond of the ladies and of a glass of good wine? Or were you some crafty villager, like Gil Blas, adventurous and cunning, like all good mountaineers, capable of coming out on top in every enterprise of this life? Were you happy or were you sad? Were your cheeks scalded by tears or dilated with laughing? Was the skin which once attired you wrinkled with loving kisses or doleful abstinence?"

"But look here, Don Pedro," exclaimed the sexton at this point, "that skull which you are holding is neither that of a marquis nor of a gentleman of quality, but of one of my own ancestors who was connected with this church many years ago. He was a sexton like myself, a poor man, who passed his life saving his money and denying himself bread in order to come sooner to this place, and now his heirs are gayly throwing away his savings, while he has turned to dust and ashes in this corner. He had a very big head, and in this way I

recognize him. If you think that skull is so very beautiful, you ought to tell them to put it in a museum——”

As though nothing had interrupted him Pedro went on with his apostrophe: “Who can reestablish your image and make your eyes shine again, fill your grinning jaw with white teeth, dress these bones in soft flesh and flowing hair? Oh, if I might only be the one to bring you back to life!”

“And indeed,” exclaimed the sexton, vehemently, “do you want to take the bread out of my mouth? It is right and proper that people should die. We living have to live off the dead. If no one were to die, we soon would begin to eat each other like wild beasts. Believe me, sir, death is a great good, a necessary wisdom.”

“Yes, indeed, you are right, Leli. Death is perhaps the only good thing which God has given to us. Yes, remain here then, oh, mysterious skull. Why should I wish to bring thee back to life? Why should I wish to make thee feel again and think again, when thou hast been granted nature’s sweet restorer of sleep, the sleep of death? Continue, oh, continue thy sleep! Return to the earth, my sister, and some day perhaps we two shall rot away together, side by side, kissing each other with a cold and deathly caress.”

“But let us get out of here, Don Pedro,” exclaimed the sexton. “On my faith as a Christian, I swear that I will leave you here alone and lock you up like a crazy man in a madhouse. Do you not see that it is raining again? Do you not know that we are going to get our

death? God help me, but what strange ideas the devil has put into Don Pedro's head!"

Pedro was now leaning upon a column, pale, silent, overcome with terror. Strange sensations were rioting through him like the buffeting of the tempest. His legs trembled and his feet shook beneath him. Everything seemed unreal, the outlines of the arcades, the columns and capitals looked as though shaken by an earthquake.

"What is this that makes me feel as though the world were coming to an end?" screamed Pedro, clinging to the column to prevent himself from falling. "Oh, you, whoever you may be, man or demon," he said, extending toward Leli his trembling and supplicating hands, "come to my aid, for I feel as though I were about to die."

Leli, shaking with terror, drew near, and Pedro clung to him, shaken by an inexplicable anguish, which engulfed his entire body like a flame.

"Lean on me if you feel bad," said Leli, pityingly, "and let us get out of here as quickly as possible. I told you that this would end badly. The cold, the dampness——"

Pedro had turned as pale as death, and with a hoarse cry and clutching at Leli, he fell to the ground, in spite of the desperate efforts of the little sexton to hold him up. And rigid he lay, his head twisted, with his muscles contracted and his eyes rolling wildly, as though in a convulsion; and then, his lips covered with foam, the poor form writhed wildly, until at last it quieted and lay stiff, inert.

And Leli, screaming, ran madly in search of help.

CHAPTER IX

PEDRO lifted his head from the pillow and tried to speak. His voice, when it came, was weak and low.

"Liana," he whispered, "forgive me, forgive me, Liana!"

Juliana bent over him, her face gentle, her eyes swimming with tears.

"I have nothing to forgive," she said, gently. "Nothing. I know now what I did not understand before, that you were sick and suffering. The things which you said were due to your illness. We will not talk about those things now."

"Oh, Liana, my Liana, you are an angel. I do not see how I could have hurt you so. I am a wicked man, Liana, but you, you will forgive me? In this painful trance of death——"

"Don't say such things, Pedro. You are so much better. In a little while you are going to be quite well. God will not refuse to hear my prayers, and I have prayed so much. When they brought you here yesterday after the accident, oh, how I suffered! I understood then how greatly I loved you. But everything is going to be all right. God has surely heard my prayers. Kiss me, dear. Why don't you also pray?"

"Don't try to deceive me, Liana. I am not going to get better. I am going to die."

"Pedro, Pedro! Don't say such things!"

"No, dear, don't be frightened. Believe me this gentle death does not terrify me. I am no longer rebellious. I look forward to the end happily, resignedly. I am only sad on your account."

"Oh, Pedro, be still, I beg of you."

"You must accustom yourself to this idea, just as I have. Remember what Thomas A'Kempis says, that we must always have the hour of death before our eyes. That is a wise and Christian-like saying. What matters life? What matters death? Why cling to a precarious, sickly, and miserable life? That is cowardice. The sad and the sick should make way for the happy and——"

"We have to know both sorrow and happiness in life," replied Liana. "God commands us to live, and should one die simply because he is not happy? Sadness is beautiful and human, just as well as——"

"If one is not happy it is because one is sick. The well man is always happy. God wishes life to be happy and not sad. The sad should die."

"Oh, are you still obsessed with these things, Pedro? Don't torment yourself with such thoughts."

"These thoughts, Liana, do not torment me any more. Yesterday the idea of death was terrifying to me. Today I look forward to death with a smile. When life is in its flower, when health and happiness are with us, the thought of death is terrifying; but solitude, meditation, sadness, sickness, age, all incline us toward the earth. We become familiar with death, learn to await

her without terror. There is a moment in which one feels the weight of living, physical and spiritual fatigue, but when the will weakens, desire evaporates, and our spirit flies from us, leaving only the sick animal, the heavy flesh, which is akin to earth. Last night, when I was overcome by this attack, I trembled for a moment on thinking that this might be the end. I was terrified at the thought that at any moment all might be over. To-day I do not feel these terrors. When the body is dying by inches there is no greater consolation than to abandon oneself to death. Death may come upon us by so many avenues: may penetrate our pores, be inhaled with our breath, imbed itself in our bones, flow in the warm stream of our blood, or in the most secret of our internal organs. Here is our poor flesh, maltreated, feverish, deformed. What a fantasy of pain! What refinements of torture!"

Pedro talked with a wildness of delirium while Juliana trembled with sorrow and fear. In the silence of the night there sounded distant sobs, and in a corner of the room an old clock ticked out the hours in a grave, serene, imperturbable voice, and the cuckoo, coming to the open door of his little house, sang out the hour as though making fun of sorrow and death.

"How cruel, how cruel you are!" sobbed Liana, kissing his white hand which hung limply over the edge of the bed.

"Yes," responded Pedro, weakly, as though all his strength had ebbed away. "Poor Liana, I am very cruel. Cruel—even in my last moments!"

CHAPTER X

THE following morning very early Pedro opened his eyes, and Juliana, who had been watching beside him all night, gazed upon him caressingly.

"You are better, aren't you? You've slept the night through. God is going to make you well. And the doctor said that he surely could cure you."

"Thank you, Liana," murmured Pedro, his voice like a sigh, "thank you, dear one, but—the doctor—is deceiving you—I have no strength left. My life is going——"

"No, don't say that, Pedro! Here come your father and your sister. They have spent the night here."

Pedro fell into a profound stupor from which he did not awaken until midday, when for a while he seemed perfectly lucid. He talked calmly with his wife, with his father, his sister. He seemed happy and resigned. Juliana seized this opportunity to ask him:

"Now that you are feeling so much better, so much happier and calmer, wouldn't you like to pray a little? Prayer is the best medicine in the world. Father Elías wishes——"

"I know what you are trying to tell me," said Pedro. "It's not necessary to prepare me. I don't like to beat about the bush. Well, I want to please you. Tell Father Elías that he may come. Yes, I want to die like

a good Christian. Don't cry, girl, don't cry. I don't wish it ever to be said that a Ceballos died in mortal sin. He who lived like a coward must die valiantly, like a Spaniard and a gentleman. Yes, Juliana," he added, with a sad smile, "I have at last arrived at the hour of sanity, which the hour of death must be even to madmen and wicked ones. I was a mixture of both of these; but now I am at last in my right and proper senses, like Don Quixote at the end of his life."

"Ah, may God make you well," murmured his weeping wife. "Even yet He may cure you."

"My soul is filled with a wonderful peace," replied Pedro, dreamily, "and everything is covered with a wonderful white light! I always lived in the shadows. I renounced my destiny and my race. I dissipated the spiritual inheritance of my forefathers. I wasted my youth in stupid adventures. I went about playing with shadows and phantoms. I did not know how to learn from the past, nor to firmly face the future. My repentance is late, but let others learn from me."



CHAPTER XI

THEY had extinguished the trembling flames of the candles, the tinkling priestly bells, the odours of incense and laurel, which had accompanied the Last Sacrament, but the prayers and the weeping of friends and relatives were not yet over. Pedro lay with unseeing eyes, wildly raving.

“Silda! Come! Laugh, laugh. I want to hear you laugh! Why don’t you laugh? Father! Give me your hand. Come close to me. I cannot see your face, but I do see—the cross of Calvary—on your breast—and the sword in your hand! Thus like the old hidalgos—of Spain. There are no more heroes—no more heroism—Spain has fallen—nothing remains but Santillana dead, dead, dead also. Don Rodrigo! Isn’t Don Rodrigo here? Sign your name! I am going to see—our lord—the Cid—Rodrigo de Vivar. I am going to tell him—that—Spain is still waiting for him—they want him to cleanse Spain from the Moors—and renegades. Great heroes—of Castile—I salute you! Don Fernando! Now we are alike! Blind—both of us! I cannot see—I cannot see.—It is night—the dark night of the soul—which falls—upon me. A worthy death makes the whole life worthy.—I killed the serpent—and I married the princess!—It is high, very high, the escutcheon—but—higher yet—is the Cross! Juliana!

Liana! For you—my last thought. Illana—Santa Illana—you killed the dragon. Now you can sleep quietly in your tomb. Good-bye—now comes the night—the dark night of the soul.”

“He died like a saint,” said Don Elías, with tears in his eyes. “Just like a saint. So differently from the way he had lived.”

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